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STO

King Arthur
and His Knights

Page 32

"As he took it the hand and arm vanished into the water"

RANALLY SERIES

King Arthur and His Knights

By
MAUDE RADFORD WARREN

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CHICAGO

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TO

DWIGHT AND ROGER

"All about him old oaks stood like giant guardians"

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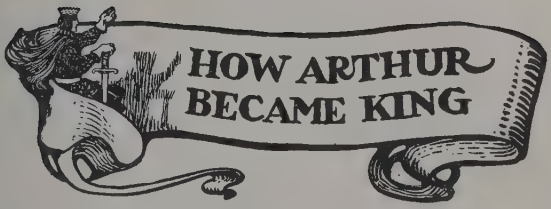


ONCE upon a time, a thousand years before Columbus discovered America, and when Rome was still the greatest city in the world, there lived a brave and beautiful youth whose name was Arthur. His home was in England, near London; and he lived with the good knight Sir Hector, whom he always called father.

They dwelt in a great square castle of gray stone, with a round tower at each corner. It was built about a courtyard, and was surrounded by a moat, across which was a drawbridge that could be raised or lowered. When it was raised the castle was practically a little island and very hard for enemies to attack.

How Arthur Became King

On one side of the moat was a large wood, and here Arthur spent a great deal of his time. He liked to lie under the trees and gaze up at the blue of the sky. All about him old oaks stood like giant guardians watching sturdily over the soil where they had grown for centuries. Arthur could look between the trunks and see rabbits and squirrels whisking about. Sometimes a herd of brown deer with shy dark eyes would pass, holding their graceful heads high in the air; sometimes a flock of pheasants with brilliant plumage rose from the bushes. Again there was no sound except the tapping of a bright-crested woodpecker, and no motion but the fluttering of leaves and the trembling of violets half buried in green moss.

At times, when it was dim and silent in the wood, Arthur would hear bursts of merry laughter, the tinkling of bells, and the jingling of spurs. Then he would know that knights and ladies were riding down the road which ran beside the trees. Soon the knights would appear on horses, brown, black, and white, with gaily

ornamented saddles, and bridles from which hung silver bells. Often the saddles were made of ivory or ebony, set with rubies or emeralds. The knights wore helmets laced with slender gold chains, and coats of mail made of tiny links of steel, so fine and light that all together hardly weighed more than a coat of cloth. Usually the legs of the knights were sheathed in steel armor; and their spurs were steel, or even gold. The ladies sat on horses with long trappings of silk, purple, white, or scarlet, with ornamented saddles and swinging bells. The robes of the ladies were very beautiful, being made of velvet or silk trimmed with ermine. Arthur liked to watch them, flashing by; crimson, and gold, and blue, and rose-colored. Better still, he liked to see the pretty happy faces of the ladies, and hear their gay voices. In those troublous times, however, the roads were so insecure that such companies did not often pass.

How Arthur Became King

Sometimes the knights and ladies came to visit Sir Hector. Then Arthur would hurry from the forest to the castle. Sir Hector would stand on the lowered

How Arthur Became King

drawbridge to greet his guests, and would lead them, with many expressions of pleasure, into the courtyard. Then he would take a huge hammer hanging from a post, and beat with it on a table which stood in a corner of the courtyard. Immediately from all parts of the castle the squires and servants would come running to take the horses of the knights and ladies. Sir Hector's wife and daughters would then appear, and with their own hands remove the armor of the knights. They would offer them golden basins of water, and towels for washing, and after that put velvet mantles upon their shoulders. Then the guests would be brought to the supper table.

But Arthur did not spend all his time dreaming in the woods or gazing at knights and ladies. For many hours of the day he practiced feats of arms in the courtyard. It was the custom in England to train boys of noble birth to be knights. As soon as they were old enough they were taught to ride. Later on, they lived much among the ladies and maidens, learning gentle manners. Under the

care of the knights, they learned to hunt, to carry a lance properly, and to use the sword; and having gained this skill, they were made squires if they had shown themselves to be of good character.

Then, day by day, the squires practiced at the quintain. This was an upright post, on the top of which turned a cross-piece, having on one end a broad board, and on the other a bag of sand. The object was to ride up at full gallop, strike the board with a long lance, and get away without being hit by the sand bag.

Besides this, the squires had services to do for the knights, in order that they might learn to be useful in as many ways as possible, and to be always humble. For instance, they took care of the armor of the knights, carried letters and messages for them, accompanied them at joustings and tournaments, being ready with extra weapons or assistance; and in the castle they helped to serve the guests at table. After months of such service, they went through a beautiful ceremony and were made knights. In the country round about, Arthur, of all the squires,

How Arthur Became King

was the most famous for his skill in the use of the lance and the sword, for his keenness in the hunt, and for his courtesy to all people.

Now, at this time there was no ruler in England. The powerful Uther of Wales, who had governed England, was dead, and all the strong lords of the country were struggling to be king in his place. This gave rise to a great deal of quarreling and bloodshed.

There was in the land a wise magician named Merlin. He was so old that his beard was as white as snow, but his eyes were as clear as a little child's. He was very sorry to see all the fighting that was going on, because he feared that it would do serious harm to the kingdom.

In those days the great and good men who ruled in the church had power almost equal to that of the monarch. The kings and the great lords listened to their advice, and gave them much land, and money for themselves and for the poor. So Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the churchman who in all England was the most beloved, and said:

"Sir, it is my advice that you send to all the great lords of the realm and bid them come to London by Christmas to choose a king."

How Arthur Became King

The archbishop did as Merlin advised, and at Christmas all the great lords came to London. The largest church in the city stood not far from the north bank of the Thames. A churchyard surrounded it, filled with yew trees, the trunks of which were knotted with age. The powerful lords rode up in their clanking armor to the gate, where they dismounted, and giving their horses into the care of their squires, reverently entered the church.

There were so many of them that they quite filled the nave and side-aisles of the building. The good archbishop, from where he stood in the chancel, looked down on them all. Just behind him was the altar covered with a cloth of crimson and gold, and surmounted by a golden crucifix and ten burning candles. In front of him, kneeling under the gray arches which spanned the church, were the greatest men in the kingdom. He looked at their stern bronzed faces, their

How Arthur Became King

heavy beards, their broad shoulders, and their glittering armor, and prayed God to make the best man in the land king.

Then began the service. At the close of the first prayer some of the knights looked out of the window, and there in the churchyard they saw a great square stone. In the middle of it was an anvil of steel a foot high, and fixed therein was a beautiful sword. On the sword was some writing set in with gold which said:

"Whosoever pulls this sword out of this stone and anvil is the real king of all England."

The knights who read this told the archbishop, but he said:

"I command you all to keep within the church and still pray to God. No man is to touch the sword until all the prayers are said."

After the service was over, the lords went into the churchyard. They each pulled at the sword, but none could stir it.

"The king is not here," said the archbishop, "but God will make him known. Meantime, let ten good knights keep watch over this sword."

How Arthur Became King

The knights were soon chosen, and then the archbishop said that on a fixed day every man in the kingdom should try to pull the sword out of the anvil. He ordered that on New Year's day all the people should be brought together for a great tournament to be held on the south bank of the Thames, near London bridge. After a few days spent in jousting among the knights, each man should make the trial to find out whether or not he was to be king.

The brave youth Arthur did not know of the contest that was to be made for the sword. Sir Hector told him that he was to go to a tournament, but he did not tell him the reason for holding the tournament. So Arthur rode to London with Sir Hector; and Sir Kay, who was Sir Hector's oldest son, was with them.

Sir Hector and Sir Kay rode soberly in front. They were tall, stalwart men and rode black horses, their dark figures making shadows on the light snow that had fallen. Arthur, riding behind them, felt exhilarated by the crisp winter air which caused the blood to dance in his

How Arthur Became King

veins. Sometimes he stood up in his saddle and flicked with his sword the dead leaves on the oaks. Again he made his horse crush the thin crust of ice that had formed in tiny pools on the road. He was so happy in the thought of the tournament he was to see, that he could have sung for joy.

The road was not very wide, for few carts passed upon it, but it had been well worn by riders. Sometimes it wound through a bit of thick woods; again it rose up over a gently rolling hill. From the hilltops the riders could see London far in the distance. It looked at first like a gray haze; then, as the three came nearer, the buildings, large and small, grew plain to the sight. The castles and huts, barns and sheds, smithies, shops and mills, stood out in the keen sunlight. A high wall surrounded them, while on one side flowed the river Thames.

After they had entered the city, and had passed the churchyard, and had almost reached London bridge, Sir Kay discovered that he had left his sword at home.

"Will you go back for it?" he asked Arthur.

How Arthur Became King

"That I will," said Arthur, glad of the chance to ride longer in the delightful air.

But when he reached their dwelling, he could not get in. The drawbridge was raised, and he could not make the warden hear his calling. Then Arthur was disturbed, and said to himself:

"I will hasten to the churchyard we passed, and take the beautiful sword which I saw in the stone. It does not seem to belong to anyone, and my brother Kay must have a weapon."

So he rode on till he reached the churchyard, dismounted, and tied his horse to a sapling. The ten knights who guarded the sword had gone away to see the combats in the tournament. Arthur ran up and pulled lightly but eagerly at the sword. It came at once from the anvil. He hurried to Sir Kay, who was waiting for him on London bridge. Sir Kay knew that the weapon was the one that had been fixed fast in the stone, but he said nothing to Arthur, and the two soon overtook Sir Hector, who had ridden

How Arthur Became King

slowly to the field where the tournament was taking place. Sir Kay immediately told his father what had happened.

The good knight at once spoke with great respect to Arthur.

"Sir," he said, "you must be the king of this land."

"What mean you, sir?" asked Arthur.

Sir Hector told the wondering youth the reason why he was destined to be king. Then he said:

"Can you put this sword back in its place and pull it out again?"

"Easily," replied Arthur.

The three returned to the great stone, and Arthur put back the sword. Sir Hector tried to take it out, but failed.

"Now, you try," he said to Sir Kay.

But Sir Kay, in spite of great efforts, also failed. Then Arthur, at Sir Hector's bidding, tried, and at once pulled forth the sword. At that Sir Hector and Sir Kay knelt before Arthur.

"Alas," said Arthur, raising them from the ground, "my own dear father and my brother, why do you kneel to me?"

"Nay, my lord Arthur," said Sir Hec-

tor, "I am not your father. You are of higher blood than I am. Long ago, when you were a little baby, Merlin brought you to me to take care of, telling me that you were to be the king." *How Arthur Became King*

"Then whose son am I?" cried Arthur.

"There are two stories: the one that Merlin tells, and the one that old Bleys, the master of Merlin, tells. Merlin brought you to me, saying that you were the son of King Uther and Yguerne his wife. But because the king was dead and the lords powerful and jealous, he told me to guard you in secrecy lest your life be taken. I did not know whether the story was true or false then, but you were a helpless child, and Merlin was a wise sage, and so I took you and brought you up as my own."

Arthur was so astonished that he did not ask to hear the tale that Bleys told. He stood gazing at Sir Hector, who said:

"And now, my gracious lord, will you be good to me and mine when you are king?"

"I will, indeed," replied Arthur, "for I am more beholden to you than to any

How Arthur Became King

one else in the world, and also to my good lady and foster mother, your wife, who has reared me as if I were her own child. If it be God's will that I shall sometime become king, ask of me then what you will."

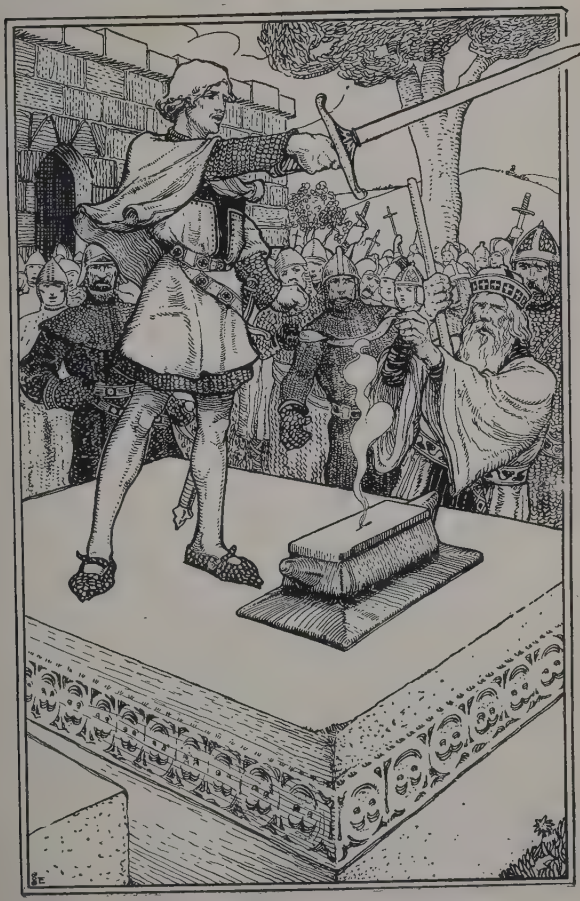
"Sir," said Sir Hector, "I ask that you make my son Sir Kay, your foster brother, the steward of all your lands."

"That shall be done," said Arthur, "and more. He shall have that office as long as I live."

Then the three went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and related to him the story of Merlin and all that had occurred. At his request they told no one else.

At the command of the archbishop on Twelfth day, which is the sixth of January, all the great lords assembled in the churchyard. Each tried to draw forth the sword, and each failed. Then the untitled people came and tried. Everyone failed until at last Arthur stepped forward. He hardly more than touched the sword when it came away in his hand.

At this many of the great lords were angry.



"He hardly more than touched the sword"

How Arthur Became King

"He is but a boy," they said, "and not of high blood."

They refused to believe the story of his birth told by Merlin and Sir Hector. And because of all the quarreling, it was decided to have another trial at Candlemas, which fell in the month of February. Again Arthur was victorious. Then the great lords decreed that there should be another trial at Easter, and again Arthur succeeded. Next they decided to have a final trial at the feast of the Pentecost, which fell in May.

Meanwhile, Merlin advised the archbishop to see that Arthur had a bodyguard. So the archbishop selected several knights whom the former king, Uther, had trusted. These were Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere; Sir Geraint and Sir Hector and Sir Kay were also chosen. These brave men formed a bodyguard for Arthur until the feast of the Pentecost.

At this time Arthur again drew out the sword from the anvil. Then the common people, who had so far let the lords have their will, cried out:

How Arthur Became King

"We will have Arthur for our king, and we will have no more delay, for we see that it is God's will that he shall be our ruler."

Then all the people knelt down, high and low, rich and poor, and begged Arthur's pardon for the delay he had undergone. Arthur forgave them, and taking his sword, reverently placed it on the great altar beside which the archbishop stood. This was a sign that he meant to dedicate himself and his sword to God.

Afterward the crowning was held, and all the brave men and fair ladies in the land were present. The lords wore beautiful robes of velvet and ermine, with gold and jewels on their breast-plates. The ladies' robes were of purple and white and scarlet and gold and blue, and they wore many pearls and rubies and diamonds, so that all the place where they were assembled was glowing with light and color.

But Arthur, who wore a plain white robe, did not think of the beauty and richness. He was very grave, knowing that he was about to take a solemn oath.

How Arthur Became King

He bowed his head, while the archbishop set upon it the golden crown, which gleamed with jewels. Then he stood up before his people, and vowed that he would be a good king and always do justice. All the people uncovered their heads and vowed to serve and obey him; and when he smiled kindly on them as he rode slowly through the throng, they threw up their caps and shouted joyfully: "Long live King Arthur! Long live the King!"

King Arthur chose worthy men for his officers, making Sir Kay steward as he had promised; Sir Ulfius he made chamberlain, and Sir Brastias warden. Arthur gave offices also to Sir Hector and Sir Bedivere and Sir Geraint.

After his crowning the king set about righting all the wrongs that had been done since the death of King Uther. He gave back the lands and money that had been taken from widows and orphans, and would permit no unkindness to any of his subjects. Thus, at the very beginning of his reign, his people began to call him

"Good King Arthur"

THE GOOD SWORD EXCALIBUR

SOON after the crowning of King Arthur, he was journeying through the land with Merlin, the wise old magician, when they met a knight who challenged Arthur to a combat. The two fought, and at last the knight wounded Arthur severely. In the end the king was victorious, but he had lost so much blood that he could go no farther. Merlin took him to a good hermit who healed his wound in three days. Then the king departed with Merlin, and as they were slowly riding along he said:

"I am still weak from the blood I have lost, and my sword is broken."

"Do not fear," said Merlin. "You

The Good Sword Excalibur

shall lose no more blood and you shall have a good sword. Ride on trustfully with me."

They rode in silence until they came to a lake, large and quiet, and as beautiful in color as a pearl. While Arthur was looking at its beauty, he became suddenly aware of three tall women, with fair, sweet faces, standing on the bank.

"Who are they?" the king asked.

"Three queens who shall help you at your worst need," answered Merlin. "Now look out upon the lake again."

Arthur turned his eyes upon the lake and saw that in the distance a slight mist had arisen. Through it the figure of a lady glided over the surface of the water. Her robe appeared to be made of waves which streamed away in flowing curves from her body. Her head and shoulders seemed wrapped in foam tinted with the colors of the rainbow, and her arms glittered with sparkles which came from bubbles of water. She was so wonderful that Arthur looked at her for some time before he asked softly:

"Who is she?"

Arthur and the Lady of the Lake

The Good Sword Excalibur

"She is the Lady of the Lake," said Merlin. "She lives in a rock in the middle of the lake. See, she is coming toward us. Look at what is beyond her in the water."

Arthur looked and saw rising above the surface of the water an arm clothed in pure white. This arm held a huge cross-hilted sword, so brilliant that Arthur's eyes were dazzled.

When the Lady of the Lake approached nearer, he said:

"Damsel, what sword is that? I wish it were mine, for I have none."

The lady smiled, saying:

"Step into yonder boat, row to the sword, and take it, together with the scabbard."

So Arthur entered a little boat that was tied to the shore, and rowed out to the sword. As he took it and the scabbard, all gleaming with jewels, the hand and arm vanished into the water. And when Arthur looked about, the three queens and the Lady of the Lake were also gone.

As Arthur, still gazing at the sword, rowed to shore, Merlin said to him:

"My lord Arthur, which pleases you more, sword or scabbard?" *The Good Sword Excalibur*

"In truth, the sword," replied the king.

"Let me assure you," said Merlin, smiling gravely, "that the scabbard is worth ten of the sword. While you have it with you you shall never lose blood, no, no matter how sorely you are wounded. So see that you guard it well."

The king, who was looking at the sword, sighed.

"There is writing on the sword," he said.

"True, my lord, written in the oldest tongue in the world."

"*Take me* on one side," said Arthur, "and *Cast me away* on the other. I am glad to take the sword, but it saddens me to think of casting it away."

Merlin's face grew sad, too. He was so wise that he knew what was going to happen in the future, and he was well aware that when the time came to cast the sword away, much evil would have befallen the good King Arthur. But he

The Good Sword Excalibur

knew that the time was yet very far off; so he said:

"You have taken the sword. Now use it to make justice and right prevail in all the land. Do not think of casting it away until you must."

Arthur grew joyful again as he felt the strength of the good sword in his hand, and the two rode cheerfully forward through the country.

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ALTHOUGH Arthur had been crowned king, he was by no means sure that all the nobles of the land would accept him as ruler. In accordance with the custom of the time, he gave a feast in order to find out who were his friends and who his enemies. All who came to the feast would, he supposed, consent to be his followers.

He chose the largest hall in London, and had the walls hung with rich cloths. Upon the floor, strewn with rushes, were placed trestles, and across these, boards were laid. Upon them fine white linen was spread, and golden saltcellars, wine-bowls, and water-jugs set about.

When the guests assembled there were

The Great Feast and What Followed

so many that Arthur was delighted, for he thought they were all his friends. He sat at the head of one table, and Sir Hector sat at the head of the other. Arthur wore a gold crown on his head, but it was no brighter than his hair, and the blue turquoises with which it was set were no bluer than his eyes. From his shoulders to the ground hung a magnificent red robe with gold dragons embroidered upon it.

The cooks and squires came in from the kitchen carrying food, their ruddy faces beaming from the heat of the fires. First of all, sixty boars' heads were borne in on silver platters. Then followed, on golden dishes, peacocks and plovers which had been so skillfully cooked that their bright colors were preserved. After the guests had eaten all they cared for of this food, tiny roasted pigs were brought in, and set on all fours upon the tables. By this time, all the gold and silver goblets which had been filled with wine needed refilling. Then the squires carried in beautiful white swans on silver platters, and roasted cranes and curlews on plates that glowed like the sun. After

The Great Feast and What Followed

that came rabbits stewed in sweet sauce, and hams and curries. The last course consisted of tarts and preserves, dates and figs and pomegranates.

The supper began about five o'clock, and the guests ate and drank into the night. Although it was past Easter time, the weather was a little cold, and so upon the stone flagging between the two long tables the king ordered fires to be lighted. The bright flames darted up, flashing on the gold threads woven in the hangings of the walls, and on the steel armor of the lords, and gleaming on the jewels set in the gold and silver goblets which the squires were carrying about. At one side sat a band of musicians singing of the glories of King Arthur, and of the folk-tales of his ancestors and people, accompanying themselves on their harps.

After the guests had risen from the tables and gone to their camps, Arthur sent messengers to them with rich gifts of horses and furs and gold. But most of the lords received the messengers scornfully.

"Take back these gifts to the beardless

The Great Feast and What Followed

boy who has come of low blood," they said; "we do not want them. We have come here to give him gifts of hard blows with our hard swords."

The messengers were astonished to hear these things spoken of their good king. Nevertheless, they told Arthur all that had been said to them. He sent no answer back, but he called together all the lords whom he was sure were loyal to him, and asked their advice. They said to him:

"We cannot give you advice, but we can fight."

"You speak well, my lords," answered Arthur, "and I thank you for your courage. Will you take the advice of Merlin? You know that he has done much for me, and he is very wise."

The lords and barons answered that they would do whatever Merlin advised. When Merlin came to the council hall he said:

"I warn you that your enemies are very strong. They have added to their numbers so that now you have against you eleven mighty kings."

The Great Feast and What Followed

At this the lords looked dismayed.

"Unless our lord Arthur has more men than he can find in his own realm," said Merlin, "he will be overcome and slain. Therefore I give you this counsel. There are two brothers across the sea; both are monarchs and both very strong. One is King Ban of Benwick, and the other is King Bors of Gaul. Now these two have an enemy, also a powerful ruler. Therefore, send to the brothers, King Bors and King Ban who are now both in Benwick, and say to them that if they will help Arthur in his war against the eleven kings, Arthur will help them against their common enemy."

"That is very good counsel," said the king and the lords.

So they chose Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias as messengers, and these two hurried away, hopeful of success. When they reached the town in Benwick where King Bors and King Ban were, knights came forth to receive them and to hear their message. As soon as it was learned from whom they had come they were led into the presence of the brothers. Both

The Great Feast and What Followed

were very large men. King Bors was dark, and was dressed in black armor. King Ban was dark, too; the colors that he wore on his shield were green and gold. He was the father of Sir Lancelot, the knight who afterwards became the most powerful of the followers of Arthur.

The two kings received Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias with much favor.

"Tell King Arthur," they said, "that we will come to him as quickly as we can."

Then they gave splendid gifts to Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias, who hurried back to Arthur with the message.

In a short time King Bors and King Ban arrived with ten thousand of their soldiers, and as Arthur had ten thousand, they felt certain of victory. They went into Wales, a country which Arthur's followers knew well, and waited confidently for the enemy.

The eleven kings collected a great host of sixty thousand men, fifty thousand on horseback and ten thousand on foot. They marched towards the place where Arthur was, and set up their camp near a wood about a mile distant. When

King Bors and King Ban

The Great Feast and What Followed

Merlin knew this, he said to Arthur and the two kings:

"This is my advice: Set upon your enemies at midnight when they are unprepared, and then you will have the advantage."

So Arthur and the two royal brothers and the twenty thousand soldiers crept up to where the eleven kings and their men lay. They took a road circling round the wood. Moving with great caution, they drew nearer and nearer until they could see first the camp fires in a circle around the white tents; and then, against the flashing flames, the dark figures of the men who were keeping guard. Sometimes they were afraid that the noise they made would alarm their enemies, but on account of a heavy windstorm, they were unheard. When his men were quite near, Arthur gave the word of command. The whole army uttered a great shout, and ran forward in companies upon their enemies. In a few minutes they had knocked down most of the tents, and killed many soldiers.

It was a dreadful thing to be attacked in

the dark without warning. But the eleven kings were brave men, even though they were so unjust to Arthur in trying to take his kingdom from him, and made a good fight. Perhaps they would have made a better one if they had known how few the men were under Arthur.

Before day dawned, Merlin told Arthur to draw back his troops. This he did, leaving about ten thousand of the enemy dead behind him. He, however, had not lost very many men.

At daybreak Arthur and his followers saw that the lay of the land could be used to their advantage. Between them and the enemy was a narrow road, bounded on one side by a lake, and on the other side by a dense wood. One part of this wood, however, was thin enough to allow men to hide in it.

"Now," said Merlin, "let King Bors and King Ban take their soldiers and hide in the wood for a long time. Then, my lord Arthur, stand up before the enemy with your men."

"Why shall we do this?" asked Arthur.

"Because," said the wise old man,

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"when the eleven kings see how few in number your troops are, they will let you proceed down the passage. They will think that if you march close to them they can overcome you. But you can fill up this narrow road with more and more men from the wood. Then the enemy cannot surround you."

"That seems very good," said Arthur.

"And at last," continued Merlin, "when the eleven kings are weary, let King Bors and King Ban come forth. Then surely the courage of our enemies will fail."

The plan was carried out. Arthur's men marched down the passage. The green wood was on one side, and on the other was the lake, the water of which was so clear that it reflected the bodies of the soldiers with their shields and helmets. The sun shone on their armor. The little birds in the woods sang as they passed. But the men were thinking of nothing but the expected battle.

When they had come close to the enemy, they saw the eleven kings all in a row, mounted on big handsome horses.

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Their fifty thousand men were behind them. Suddenly these rode forward and the battle began.

It was a fierce fight. In a very short time the field was covered with overthrown men and horses. Broken shields and helmets lay on the ground, and many of the knights who had been fighting on horseback were unhorsed, and were fighting on foot. Arthur galloped here and there among his enemies, conquering with his trusty sword all with whom he fought. The woods and the water rang with his sword strokes. The noise drowned the sweet songs of the birds, but still they sang, and flew about gaily, all unaware of the grim death-struggle going on beneath them.

Finally the time arrived for bringing forward King Bors and his men. The great dark king went thundering down upon his enemies. When the King of Orkney saw him coming, he cried:

"Oh, we are in great danger! I see King Bors, one of the best and bravest kings in the world, and he is helping our enemy."

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Then the other kings were astonished, for they did not know that Arthur had sent outside his country for help.

"But we will fight on," they said, "no matter how powerful he is."

While they were still fighting, but with great loss of courage, they heard the loud sounds made by the hoofs of other tramping horses, and King Ban rode down on them, followed by his men. His black brows were frowning, and his green and gold colors glittered in the sun.

"Alas, alas!" cried the King of Orkney, "now in truth are we lost, for here is another king, no less great than his brother Bors. But we must neither flee nor yield."

The eleven kings, being agreed to this, continued the battle, though so many of their men were killed that the King of Orkney wept. When he saw some of his men running away, he wept still more, for he thought it was better to die than to be a coward.

Though they did not intend to run away, the eleven kings thought it would be wise to retreat to a little copse near by.

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"'We will fight no more,' he said"

The Great Feast and What Followed

It was late and they were tired and wished to rest before fighting again. King Bors and King Ban could not help admiring these rulers.

"In truth," said King Ban, "they are the bravest men I ever saw. I would they were your friends."

"Indeed, so would I," replied Arthur; "but I have no hope of that, for they are determined to destroy me, and so we must fight on."

At this moment Merlin rode up on his great black horse.

"Have you not done enough?" he cried to Arthur. "Of their sixty thousand men there are left but fifteen thousand. It is time to stop, I say. If you fight on, they will win the day. The tide will turn against you."

Arthur hesitated and Merlin said:

"The eleven kings have a great trouble coming of which they are ignorant. The Saracens have landed in their countries to the number of over forty thousand. So your enemies will have so much fighting to do that they will not attack you again for three years."

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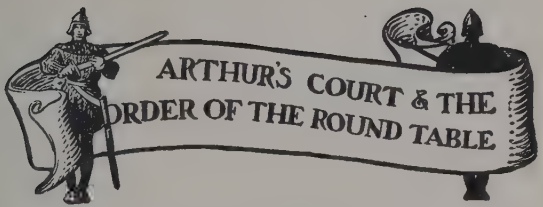
Then Arthur was glad, for it had grieved him deeply to fight so long and to lose his good soldiers.

"We will fight no more," he said.

"That is well," replied Merlin. "Now give presents to your soldiers, for to-day they have proved themselves equal to the best fighters in the world."

"True, indeed!" exclaimed King Bors and King Ban.

So Arthur gave gifts to his own men; and a great deal of gold to the brother kings, both for themselves and for their soldiers. And the two kings went home rejoicing.



AFTER Arthur had proved his prowess in his contest with the eleven kings, he decided to establish his Court and the Order of the Round Table. The place he chose was the city of Camelot in Wales, which had a good situation, being built upon a hill. He called the wise Merlin and ordered him to make a great palace on the summit of the hill. Through his powers of enchantment, Merlin was able to do this very quickly, and within a week the king and his personal attendants were settled in the palace.

The main part consisted of a great Assembly Hall built of white marble, the roof of which seemed to be upheld by pillars of green and red porphyry, and

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was surmounted by magnificent towers. The outside walls of the hall were covered with beautiful rows of sculpture. The lowest row represented wild beasts slaying men. The second row represented men slaying wild beasts. The third represented warriors who were peaceful, good men. The fourth showed men with growing wings. Over all was a winged statue with the face of Arthur. Merlin meant to show by means of the first row that formerly evil in men was greater than good; by the second that men began to conquer the evil in themselves, which in time caused them to become really good, noble, and peace-loving men, as in the third row. And finally, through the refining influence of Good King Arthur and his wise helpers, men would grow to be almost as perfect as the angels.

The main doorway was in the shape of an arch, upheld by pillars of dark yellow marble. The hall was lighted by fourteen great windows, through which the light streamed in soft colors upon the marble floors. Between these windows, and along the cornices, were beautiful

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decorations. There were carvings in white marble of birds and beasts and twining vines. There was mosaic work of black and yellow and pink marble and of lapis lazuli, as blue as a lake when the clear sun shines full upon its surface. Under the windows were many stone shields, beneath each of which was the name of a knight. Some shields were blazoned with gold, some were carved, and some were blank. The walls were hung with beautiful tapestries which had been woven by the ladies of the land for Arthur's new palace. On each had been pictured some episode from the life of King Arthur; the drawing of the magic sword from the anvil, the finding of the good sword Excalibur, his deeds of justice and acts of kindness, and his many battles and wars.

The two wings of the palace contained the dining hall and kitchen and the living apartments of all the members of the court who made their home with the king. The dining hall was only a little less beautiful than Arthur's great Assembly Hall. The walls were hung

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with cloths of scarlet and gold. The deep fireplace was supported by four bronze pillars. In the middle of the room were long tables made of oak boards set on ivory trestles. At a banquet the walls were hung with garlands of flowers or festoons of branches.

The great kitchen had stone walls and stone flagging. The fireplace was so large that there was room for a whole ox to be roasted, and above hung cranes from which half a dozen kettles could be suspended, and pots of such a size that pigs could be boiled whole in them. All about the walls were cupboards. Some were full of plates of wood, iron, steel, silver, and gold, and flagons, cups, bowls, and saltcellars of gold and silver. Others were used for the storing of cold meats and fruits. There were several tables on which the cooked food was cut, and benches upon which the cooks rested when they were tired of serving the hungry eaters.

Well might they have grown tired.

Supper, the most important meal of the day, lasted from three until six, and often

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longer. But the cooks, and the little scullion boys who washed the pots and pans, and the attendants who carried in the food to the dining hall, all wore contentment and happiness on their faces as they hurried about with their long blouses tucked out of harm's way; for to serve King Arthur and his guests was considered a real privilege.

The sleeping rooms were furnished with chests, and chairs, and beds spread with fine linen and with ermine-lined covers. Hangings of various colors were upon the walls. On the floors were strewn rushes, and among them was thrown mint which gave forth an agreeable odor.

After Arthur, his officers, and his servants had been in the palace a few days, the king formally established his Court. He invited all the knights who cared to do so to come with their families and retinues and live with him. Some preferred to remain in their own castles, but others gladly went to live with the king. Soon all were comfortably settled.

The king's officers were very important members of Arthur's court. First of these

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came the Archbishop of Canterbury, who held the highest place in the king's regard. It was his duty to conduct the church services for Arthur and his followers, and to christen, marry, and bury the people of Camelot. Next, Sir Ulfius as chamberlain superintended the care of the king's rooms. Sir Brastias, who was warden, superintended the servants. Sir Kay, who was steward, had charge of all the food and the kitchen. Sir Hector, as treasurer, took care of the king's gold and rendered the accounts. Sir Geraint managed all the tournaments and outdoor sports of the knights and squires. There were other officers to help these, and all did their work faithfully and lovingly.

The knights whom Arthur chose to be members of his Round Table were mostly selected from these officers. As members of this order there were one hundred and fifty of the knights who had shown themselves especially brave in battle and who were devoted followers of the king. Next to being king, the greatest honor which could fall to a warrior was to be

made a member of the Round Table, for all who belonged to the order were dedicated to the service of God and mankind. There is no glory greater than such a dedication.

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In his great hall Arthur had placed a huge table, made round in shape so that there should be neither head nor foot, a higher place nor a lower place. Arthur wished all who sat there to be equals. These chosen knights were to give him council in times of peace and of war.

It was a solemn hour when the knights took their places. The Archbishop of Canterbury blessed them and their seats. Then each one came to Arthur, who stood at the top of the Assembly Hall, and did him homage. Next they took their vows. They promised to be brave and good, never false, or mean, or cruel. If anyone with whom they fought begged for mercy, they would show him mercy. And they vowed never to fight for a wrong cause or for money. Each year at the feast of the Pentecost they were to repeat these vows.

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Other members of Arthur's Court were old, brave knights who could no longer fight, but who liked to be near the king and his warriors, and gave the wisdom of age and experience to his councils; young, ambitious, and promising knights who had had but little real experience in battle; and faithful squires who had had no real experience at all. Boys from six to fourteen years were pages. There were others who transformed Arthur's Court to a place of grace and beauty,—the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of the warriors.

Although they did not help in the councils of war, these ladies were of great assistance in training the knights to be tender and courteous. They taught the little pages good manners and unselfishness. They assisted the knights in removing their armor when they came in tired from riding or fighting. They sat with Arthur and the knights in the evening in the dining-hall, singing or playing upon harps, or listening to the tales that were told. When the knights were away the ladies stayed in their own chambers,

hearing wise readings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, or other learned men, listening to Merlin's words of wisdom, and embroidering the beautiful hangings and cushions which were to adorn the palace. *Arthur's Court and the Order of the Round Table*

It was a month before Arthur's Court was established, and during that time the city of Camelot was a scene of continual merriment. The people of the place were glad that the king had come, for that meant much gain for them. Those of them who did not live in the palace had their houses or shops on the streets which wound about the foot of the hill. Many of the shops belonged to armorers, who had armor of all sorts for any one who would buy. They were glad in their turn to buy the swords of famous knights which had been used in great battles, for such weapons they could always sell again at a good price. These shopkeepers and the servants and the squires and the warriors all united to make the city of Camelot a beautiful one, for the sake of their king. The streets were kept strewn with rushes and flowers. Rich

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awnings and silken draperies were hung from the houses.

All day long processions passed, made up of the followers of all those lords who gave allegiance to the king. They carried the banners of their masters, crimson, white, or scarlet, gold, silver, or azure, making the streets glow with color. The marching squires wore ornamented blouses, drawn in at the waist, long silk stockings, and shoes of embroidered leather. The bowmen were dressed in green kirtles, rather shorter than those of the squires, and wore dark woolen hose; they carried their bows and arrows slung across their shoulders. The servants were dressed in much the same way, except that their blouses were longer and of various colors. Many knights rode in the processions, their long plumes waving in the wind, their armor shining, and their falcons perched upon their wrists.

All day long, too, bands of musicians played on flutes and timbrels and tabors and harps; bands of young men and women sang songs in praise of the king; story-tellers went about relating old tales

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of famous heroes. The young men showed their strength by tumbling and wrestling, and their grace by dancing; the young women also danced.

The wise Merlin often passed along the streets, walking silently among the merry throngs of people. Sometimes the little Dagonet danced at his side, Dagonet the king's jester, a tiny man who made merriment for the Court with his witty sayings. He always wore a tight-fitting red blouse and a peaked cap ornamented with bells, and he carried a mock scepter in the shape of a carved ivory stick.

Whenever Arthur appeared before his people, church-bells were joyously rung and trumpets were sounded. The king, as he rode, distributed presents to the poor people:—capes, coats, and mantles of serge, and bushels of pence. In a dining-hall at the palace, feasts were held on those days for them, and they were also open for all the people who might come.

When the weather was beautiful, tables were placed on the sward outside the palace, and those who cared to, ate

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under the shade of the trees, listening to the music of the blackbirds, whose singing was almost as loud as that of the chorus of damsels who sang in the palace. Every hour the servants carried in and out great quarters of venison, roasted pheasants and herons, and young hawks, ducks, and geese, all on silver platters. Curries and stews and tarts were innumerable. In the midst of the sward a silver fountain had been set from which flowed sweet wine. Even the great feasts of the year, which were held at Christmas, upon the day of the Passover, at Pentecost, upon Ascension day, and upon St. John's day, were not as wonderful as these feasts, when the king held holiday with his people.

On these days of merriment, when the people were not eating or drinking or marching in processions, they were at the tournament field, watching the combats. Here the best of Arthur's knights, mounted on strong horses and wearing heavy armor, were ranged on two sides of the field. Behind each row was a pavilion filled with ladies. Four

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heralds stood ready to blow the trumpets which gave the signal for the combats. Each herald wore crimson silk stockings and crimson velvet kirtles, tight at the waist, and reaching half-way to the knee.

When it was time to begin the heralds blew the trumpets, the ladies bent over eagerly, and the knights spurred their horses forward, riding with their lances in rest. In a moment clouds of dust arose, circling up as high as the plumes on the knights' helmets, and their lances crashed against each other's shields. Many of the lances broke. Sometimes the shock of contact overthrew a knight. But no one was hurt, for the good King Arthur had ordered that the combats should be friendly.

When the jousting had lasted for several hours, those knights who had shown themselves the stronger, received prizes from the ladies. The prizes were suits of armor ornamented with gold, and swords with jeweled hilts. The knight who, of all, was the strongest, chose the lady whom he considered most beautiful, and

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crowned her "The Queen of Love and Beauty."

During the month of feasting, Arthur made knights of some of the squires. A young squire was first obliged to show his skill in tilting at the quintain. Then his father presented him with falcons and sparrowhawks for hunting, and arms and robes. He also gave robes and arms to his son's companions, and, to their mothers and sisters, furs and embroidered robes, and belts of gold. Finally he gave money to the singers and players, and servants, and to the poor people of Camelot.

At about sunset the young squire went into the church, where the Archbishop of Canterbury held a solemn service. The youth took the armor which he had chosen, and placed it on the floor in front of the altar. He was then left alone, and all night long he prayed fervently to God to give him strength to be a noble and true knight. In the morning the king came to the church, attended by his nobles and by the archbishop. The squire laid his sword on the altar, thus

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signifying his devotion to Christ and his determination to lead a holy life. King Arthur bound the sword and spurs on the young man, and, taking Excalibur, he smote him lightly on the shoulder with it, saying, "Be thou a true and faithful knight."

Then the squire took a solemn oath to protect all who were in distress, to do right, to be a pure knight, and to have faith in God. After that the Archbishop of Canterbury preached a solemn sermon.

When the month of feasting and holiday was ended, the members of the Court returned to their usual habits of life. The Knights of the Round Table went forth to right wrongs and to enforce the law. All who were in distress came to the king for help. And to the whole country Arthur's Court was famous as a place where unkindness was never done, and where truth, justice, and love reigned.

KING ARTHUR & THE PRINCESS GUINEVERE

AFTER Arthur had been established in his Court for some time, his neighbor, Leodogran, the king of Cameliard, asked him for help in a battle. To this Arthur cheerfully consented, and gathered his warrior men about him.

It chanced, as he and his men were marching past the castle of Leodogran to meet the enemy, the king's daughter, Guinevere, who was the most beautiful lady in all that land, stood on the castle wall to watch her father's allies pass. Now she did not know, of all the knights who rode by, which was Arthur. Many wore gold and jewels on their armor, while the king's armor was plain.

But Arthur saw her bending over the

"Arthur saw Guinevere bending over the wall"

King Arthur and the Princess Guinevere

wall. She was slender and graceful; her black hair fell in two long heavy braids over each shoulder; her eyes were large and black. And Arthur felt a warm love spring from his heart for her, and said to himself:

"If I win this battle for Leodogran, I shall ask him to give me the princess Guinevere for wife."

His love for Guinevere made him fight even more bravely than usual, and he soon won the battle. After he had returned to Camelot, he told his knights that he wished to marry the princess. They were very glad, because they, too, had seen her and thought her the most beautiful lady they had ever beheld.

Then Arthur said:

"I will send my three good knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, to King Leodogran to ask for Guinevere."

The three knights set forth gayly, feeling certain that King Leodogran would be glad to marry his daughter to their great Arthur. When, however, they came to the castle of Leodogran with

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their request, the king hesitated. He bade them wait for a little while in the room adjoining his large hall. Then he said to himself:

"Arthur has helped me, indeed. I know, too, that he is powerful. But I hear strange stories of his birth. There are people who say that he is not a king's son. However great he is, I cannot give him my only daughter unless he is really a true king, born of royal blood."

He called the oldest knight in his kingdom and said to him:

"Do you know anything about Arthur's birth?"

The old man looked very wise and said:

"There are two men who do know; the younger of them is twice as old as I am. They are Merlin, and Bleys, the master of Merlin. Bleys has written down the secret of Arthur's birth in a book."

Then King Leodogran laughed a little and said:

"My friend, your words have not helped me much. If Arthur had not

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helped me in my time of need more than you have helped me now, I should have been lost indeed. Go and call Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere."

So the old man brought in the three knights, and Leodogran said to them:

"I hear strange tales of your king's birth. Some say that he is indeed the son of the late King Uther, but others say that he is the son of Sir Hector. Do you believe that he is Uther's son?"

They said "Yes," and then told King Leodogran that Sir Hector had brought up King Arthur as his son, for fear that those who wanted the throne would kill the child; and that Arthur was undoubtedly Uther's son.

Still King Leodogran could not make up his mind. He bade the three lords remain with him for a few days.

Meanwhile the beautiful Queen Bellicent came to the Court, and Leodogran asked her advice.

"Do you think Arthur is a great king?" he asked. "Will he always be great?"

"He is very great," said the queen. "And all his people love him. Perhaps

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he has not many lords, but their deep love makes up for their small number."

"That may be true," replied the king.

"Besides that," added the queen, "they are good men. As you know, the Knights of the Round Table are bound by vows to be kind and true and merciful and helpful."

"I have heard it," said the king.

"Moreover," went on Queen Bellicent, "Arthur has powerful friends: Merlin, the magician, and the Lady of the Lake, who gave him his sword Excalibur, and the three fair queens, who will help him when he needs help most."

"Yes, yes," said King Leodogran," if all this is true, Arthur must prevail over his enemies. But is he the son of King Uther and Queen Yguerne? You are the daughter of Queen Yguerne by an earlier marriage, and, therefore, Arthur's half-sister if Arthur is really Uther's son. You ought surely to know the truth."

Bellicent waited a little while, and then said:

"King Leodogran, I do not know what the truth is. There are two stories: the

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story Merlin tells and the story Bleys tells. Merlin says that Arthur is Uther's son, and indeed I should like to believe it."

"But you are not sure?" asked the king.

"I am not sure. For my mother Yguerne was dark, and King Uther was dark. Their hair and eyes were black like mine. Yet Arthur's hair is as bright as gold. Besides, there is the story of old Bleys."

"What is his story?"

"He says that Uther died, weeping because he had no heir. Then Bleys and Merlin, who were present at his death, passed together out of the castle. It was a stormy night, and as they walked along by the lake they were forced by the roar of the tempest to look out upon the waves, whipped by the wind.

"Suddenly they saw a ship on the water. It had the shape of a winged dragon. All over its decks stood a multitude of people shining like gold. Then the ship vanished, and a number of great waves began to roll in towards shore.

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The ninth of these waves seemed as large as half the sea. It was murmuring with strange voices and rippling with flames. In the midst of the flames was a little fair-haired baby who was borne to Merlin's feet. Merlin stooped and picked it up, and cried, 'The King! Here is an heir for Uther!' This, King Leodogran, is the story Bleys told me before he died."

King Leodogran wondered very much. Then he said:

"But did you not question Merlin about this?"

"Yes," answered Queen Bellicent. "I asked him if this story of Bleys was true. He would only answer me with a riddle."

As King Leodogran was still silent, she said:

"Do not fear to give your daughter to Arthur, for he will be the greatest king the world has ever seen."

Leodogran felt less doubtful. While he was thinking, he fell asleep and had a dream. He saw in his dream a field covered with mist and smoke, and a phantom king standing in the cloud. He heard a voice which said, "This is not our king;

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this is not the son of Uther." But suddenly the mist disappeared and the king stood out in heaven, crowned.

King Leodogran took this dream for a good sign. He called the three knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, and said to them:

"Say to your king that I will give him Guinevere for his wife."

So the three hastily returned to King Arthur, who was overjoyed with their message.

In the month of May he sent Sir Lancelot, the son of King Ban, for Guinevere. When she came, the Archbishop of Canterbury married them. And he blessed them and said that they, with the help of the Knights of the Round Table, must do much good for the land.

THE beautiful Queen Bellicent had many sons, all of whom had gone out in the world except the youngest. His name was Gareth. His two brothers, Gawain and Modred, were with the good King Arthur, and Gareth longed to join them. His mother, however, would not let him go.

"You are not yet a man," she said. "You are only a child. Stay a little longer with me."

So Gareth stayed. One day he came to his mother and said:

"Mother, may I tell you a story?"

"Gladly," she replied.

"Then, mother, once there was a

The Coming of Gareth

golden egg which a royal eagle had laid, away up in a tree. It was so high up that it could hardly be seen. But a youth, who though poor was brave, saw it, and longed for it. He knew that if he could get it, it would bring wealth and prosperity to him. So he tried to climb. One who loved him stopped him, saying, 'You will fall and be killed if you try to reach that height.' Therefore the poor boy did not climb, and so did not fall; but he pined away with longing till his heart broke and he died."

Queen Bellicent answered:

"If the person who held him back had loved him, that person would have climbed, and found the egg, and given it to the youth."

"That could not be," said Gareth. "Mother, suppose the egg were not gold, but steel, the same steel that Arthur's sword Excalibur is made of."

The queen grew pale, for she now understood his meaning.

But Gareth spoke on:

"Dear mother, the gold egg is the glory to be won at Arthur's Court; I am

the poor youth, and you are the one who holds me back. Mother, let me go!"

Then Bellicent wept, and she said:

"Oh, my son, do not leave me. You love me more than Gawain and Modred. You are all I have left in the world."

But Gareth replied:

"Mother, I waste my strength here."

"No, no," she said. "You shall hunt; you shall follow the deer and the fox, and so grow strong. Then I will find you a beautiful wife, and we shall all live together till I die."

Gareth shook his head.

"No, mother. I do not want a wife until I have proved myself to be a worthy and brave knight. I wish to follow Arthur, my good king and uncle."

"Perhaps he is not the true king and your uncle," Bellicent said. "At least wait a little till he has shown himself to be the greatest king in the world. Stay with me."

"Nay, mother," he said. "I must go."

Then the queen thought of a plan which she hoped would soon make him willing to stay home.

The Coming of Gareth

"If I let you go, my son, you must make me a promise. The promise will prove your love to me."

"I will make a hundred promises," cried young Gareth, "if you will only let me go."

"Then," she said, "you must go in disguise to the court of Arthur. You must hire yourself out as a kitchen boy. You shall wash the pots and pans for a whole year and tell no one that you are the son of a queen."

Queen Bellicent was sure that Gareth would not wish to make such a promise. He was silent a long, long time. He had hoped to take part at once with the Knights of the Round Table in great deeds. At last he said:

'I may be a kitchen boy and still be noble in heart and mind. Besides, I can look on at the tournaments. I shall see King Arthur and Sir Lancelot and Sir Kay. Yes, mother, I will go."

Queen Bellicent was very sad. All the days before Gareth's departure her eyes followed him until he felt that he could not bear to see her grieve longer.

The Coming of Gareth

So in the middle of the night he rose quietly and woke two of his faithful servants. They dressed themselves like plowmen and started towards Camelot.

It was Easter time and the young grass was a bright green. The birds were beginning their chirping, although it was not yet light. As the dawn came, they saw the early morning mist sweeping over the mountain and forest near Arthur's city of Camelot. Sometimes the mist drew away and showed in the distance the towers gleaming like silver.

One of the servants said:

"Let us go no farther, my lord Gareth. I am afraid. That is a fairy city."

The second said:

"Yes, lord, let us turn back. I have heard that Arthur is not the real king, but a changeling brought from fairyland in a great wave all flame. He has done all his deeds with the help of Merlin's enchantment."

The first one spoke again:

"Lord Gareth, that is no real city. It is a vision."

But Gareth laughed and said:

The Coming of Gareth

"Arthur is real flesh and blood, a brave man; and a just king. Come with me to the gate of his city, and do not be afraid."

When they reached the gate of the city, they stared in amazement. It was made of silver and mother-of-pearl. In the center was carved the figure of the Lady of the Lake, with her arms outstretched in the form of a cross. In one hand she held a sword, and in the other a censer. On both sides of her figure was carved the story of the wars of King Arthur. Above all were the figures of the three queens who were to help Arthur in time of need.

The three looked till their eyes were dazzled. Then they heard a peal of music, and the gate slowly opened. An old man with a long gray beard came out to greet them, and returning led them up past the gardens and groves and roofs and towers of Camelot to Arthur's great palace on the summit of the hill.

Gareth hardly thought of the splendors of the palace. He approached the arched doorway of the Assembly Hall, thinking

only as his heart beat quickly, that at last he was to see the good King Arthur. Even before he entered he heard the voice of the king. For it was one of the days when Arthur was giving judgment to his people. *The Coming of Gareth*

The king sat on a throne made of gold and ivory and ebony. On its arms and back were carved great dragons. Arthur wore a gold crown which was not brighter than his own beautiful hair and beard. His blue eyes were as calm and clear as the sky in summer time. His trusty knights stood about him on each side of the throne. The tallest of these, who had a worn, browned face, and piercing dark eyes, under frowning brows, must be, Gareth knew, the famous knight, Sir Lancelot.

As Gareth entered, a widow came forward and cried to Arthur:

"Hear me, oh, King! Your father, King Uther, took away a field from my husband, who is now dead. The king promised us gold, but he gave us no gold, nor would he return our field."

Then Arthur said:

The Coming of Gareth

"Which would you rather have, the gold or the field?"

The woman wept, saying:

"Oh, King, my dead husband loved the field. Give it back to me."

"You shall have your field again," said Arthur, "and besides I will give you three times the amount of gold it is worth to pay you for the years King Uther had it."

Gareth thought that Arthur was indeed a just king. And while this was passing through his mind, another widow came forward and cried:

"Hear me, oh, King! Heretofore you have been my enemy. You killed my husband with your own hands. It is hard for me to ask justice or favor of you. Yet I must. My husband's brother took my son and had him slain, and has now stolen his land. So I ask you for a knight who will do battle and get my son's land for me, and revenge me for his death."

Then a good knight stepped forward and said:

"Sir King, I am her kinsman. Let me do battle for her and right her wrongs."

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"A widow cried, 'Hear me, oh, King!'"

But Sir Kay, Arthur's foster brother, said:

"Lord Arthur, do not help a woman who has called you her enemy in your own hall."

"Sir Kay," replied Arthur, "I am here to help all those who need help in my land. This woman loved her lord, and I killed him because he rebelled against me. Let her kinsman go and do battle against the man who has wronged her. Bring him here, and I shall judge him. If he is guilty he shall suffer."

While Gareth was still listening to the king's words, a messenger entered from Mark, the king of Cornwall. He carried a wonderful gold cloth which he laid at Arthur's feet, saying:

"My lord, King Mark sends you this as a sign that he is your true friend."

But Arthur said:

"Take back the cloth. When I fight with kings who are worthy men, after I have conquered them I give them back their lands, and make them my subject-kings and Knights of the Round Table. But Mark is not fit to be a king. He

The Coming of Gareth

is cruel and false. I will not call him friend.

The messenger stepped back in alarm. Arthur said to him kindly:

"It is not your fault that Mark is unworthy. Stay in this city until you are refreshed and then go back home in safety."

While the king judged other cases, Gareth looked around the great hall. Underneath the fourteen windows he saw three rows of stone shields, and under each shield was the name of a knight. If a knight had done one great deed, there was carving on his shield, if he had done two or more, there were gold markings. If he had done none, the shield was blank. Gareth saw that Sir Lancelot's shield and Sir Kay's glittered with gold. He looked for the shields of his brothers, Sir Gawain and Sir Modred. Sir Gawain's was marked with gold, but Sir Modred's was blank.

Meanwhile, Arthur had judged all the cases. Then Gareth came forward timidly and said:

"Lord King, you see my poor clothes;

give me leave to serve for twelve months in your kitchen without telling my name. After that I will fight."

"You are a fair youth," Arthur replied, "and you deserve a better gift. However, since this is all you ask, I will put you under the care of Sir Kay, who is master of the kitchen."

Sir Kay looked at Gareth with scorn.

"This youth has come from some place where he did not get enough to eat," he said, "and so he thinks of nothing but food. Yet if he wants food, he shall have it, provided he does his work well."

Sir Lancelot, who stood near by, said:

"Sir Kay, you understand dogs and horses well, but not men. Look at this youth's face; see his broad forehead and honest eyes, and beautiful hands. I believe he is of noble birth, and you should treat him well."

"Perhaps he is a traitor," Sir Kay said. "Perhaps he will poison King Arthur's food. Yet I believe he is too stupid to be a traitor. If he were not stupid, or if he were noble, he would have asked for a

The Coming of Gareth

different gift. He would have asked for a horse and armor. Let him go to my kitchen."

So Gareth went to the kitchen. And there he worked faithfully at hard tasks, such as cutting wood and drawing water. Sir Lancelot spoke to him kindly whenever he passed him, but Sir Kay was always very strict and severe. Sometimes Gareth grew discouraged and wished his mother had not exacted such a promise of him.

Whenever there was a tournament he was happy. He liked to watch the horses prancing, and the brave knights riding, with the sun shining on their helmets and lances. And he would say to himself:

"Only wait till the twelve months have passed, and then I shall ask King Arthur to let me do some brave deed. Perhaps some one will come to the hall and demand to have a wrong righted. Then I will beg the king to let me do that act of justice."

Such thoughts kept him cheerful. And indeed, before many weeks, his chance came for doing a great deed.

THE STORY OF SIR GARETH & LYNETTE

GARETH served in the kitchen of the king only one month, for his mother became sorry for the promise she had asked of him, and sent armor for him to Arthur's Court, with a letter to the king telling who the youth was. With great joy Gareth then went to Arthur and said:

"My lord, I can fight as well as my brother Gawain. At home we have proved it. Then make me a knight,—in secret, for I do not want the other knights to know my name. Make me a knight, and give me permission to right the first wrong that we hear of."

The king said gravely:

"You know all that my knights must promise?"

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

"Yes, my lord Arthur. I am willing to promise all."

"I will make you my knight in secret, since you wish it," Arthur said, "except that I must tell Sir Lancelot. He is my dearest knight, and I keep no secrets from him."

Gareth said that he would be glad to have Sir Lancelot know. Accordingly the king spoke to Sir Lancelot about Gareth.

"I have promised him that he may right the first wrong we hear of," said Arthur, "but as he has not yet proved what he can do, I want you to take a horse and follow him when he sets forth. Cover up the great lions on your shield so that he will not know who you are." Sir Lancelot agreed. Then Gareth was secretly made a knight.

That same day a beautiful young damsel came into Arthur's hall. She had cheeks as pink as apple blossoms, and very sharp eyes.

"Who are you, damsel?" asked the king, "and what do you need?"

"My name is Lynette," she said, "and I am of noble blood. I need a knight to

fight for my sister Lyonors, a lady, also noble, rich, and most beautiful."

"Why must she have a knight?" questioned Arthur.

"My Lord King, she lives in Castle Perilous. Around this castle a river circles three times, and there are three passing-places, one over each circle of the river. Three knights, who are brothers, keep a constant guard over these passing-places. A fourth knight, also a brother, clad in black armor, stands guard in front of my sister's castle. We have never seen this knight's face or heard his voice, but his brothers tell us he is the most powerful and daring knight in the world. All these four keep my sister a prisoner."

"And why?"

"Because they want her to marry one of them so that they can have her great wealth. She refuses, but they say that they will have their way. In the meantime, they demand that you send Sir Lancelot to fight with them. They hope to overthrow Sir Lancelot, thus proving themselves the greatest warriors in the land. But I believe that Sir Lancelot

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

could overthrow them; therefore, I have come for him."

Arthur remembered his promise to Sir Gareth, and did not speak of Sir Lancelot, but asked:

"Tell me what these four knights, your enemies, are like."

"The three I have talked to are vain and foolish knights, my lord," answered the damsel. "They have no law, and they acknowledge no king. Yet they are very strong, and therefore am I come for Sir Lancelot."

Then Sir Gareth rose up, crying:

"Sir King, give me this adventure."

At this, Sir Kay started up in anger, but Gareth continued:

"My king, you know that I am but your kitchen boy, yet I have grown so strong on your meat and drink that I can overthrow an hundred such knights."

The king looked at him a moment, and said:

"Go, then."

At this all the knights were amazed. The damsel's face flushed with anger.

"Shame, King!" she cried. "I asked

you for your chief knight, and you give me a kitchen boy!"

Then, before any one could prevent, she ran from the hall, mounted her horse, and rode out of the city gate. Gareth followed, and at the doorway found a noble war horse which the king had ordered to be given him. Near by were the two faithful servants who had followed him from his mother's home. They held his armor. Gareth put it on, seized his lance and shield, jumped upon his horse, and rode off joyfully.

Sir Kay, who was watching, said to Sir Lancelot:

"Why does the king send my kitchen lad to fight? I will go after the boy and put him to his pots and pans again."

"Sir Kay, do not attempt to do that," said Sir Lancelot. "Remember that the king commanded him to go."

But Sir Kay leaped on his horse and followed Gareth.

Meanwhile, Sir Gareth overtook the damsel and said:

"Lady, I am to right your wrong. Lead and I follow."

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

But she cried:

"Go back! I smell kitchen grease when you are near. Go back! your master has come for you."

Gareth looked behind and saw that Sir Kay was riding up to him. When Sir Kay was within hearing distance, he shouted:

"Come back with me to the kitchen."

"I will not," said Gareth.

Then Sir Kay rode fiercely at the youth. Gareth, however, struck him from his horse, and then turned to the damsel, saying:

"Lead on; I follow."

She rode for a long time in silence, with Gareth a few paces behind her. At last she stopped and said:

"You have overthrown your master, you kitchen boy, but I do not like you any better for it. I still smell the kitchen grease."

Sir Gareth said, very gently:

"You may speak to me as you will, but I shall not leave you till I have righted your wrong."

"Ah!" she said, scornfully, "you talk

like a noble knight, but you are not one," and she again galloped in front of him.

Presently, as they passed a thick wood, a man broke out of it and spoke to them:

"Help! help! they are drowning my lord!"

"Follow! I lead!" shouted Gareth to the damsel, and rushed into the wood. There he found six men trying to drown a seventh. Gareth attacked them with such vigor that they fled. When the rescued man had recovered, he thanked Gareth warmly.

"I am the lord of the castle yonder," he said, "and these are my enemies. You came in time."

Then he begged Gareth and the lady to stay all night in his castle. They agreed, and he led the way. He took them into his large hall and was about to seat them side by side at a dining table. But the damsel said in scorn:

"This is a kitchen boy, and I will not sit by him."

The lord looked surprised. He took Gareth to another table and sat beside him. After they had eaten, he said:

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

"You may be a kitchen boy, or the damsel may be out of her mind, but whichever is the case, you are a good fighter and you have saved my life."

The next morning Gareth and the damsel set forth. They rode for a while in silence, and then she said:

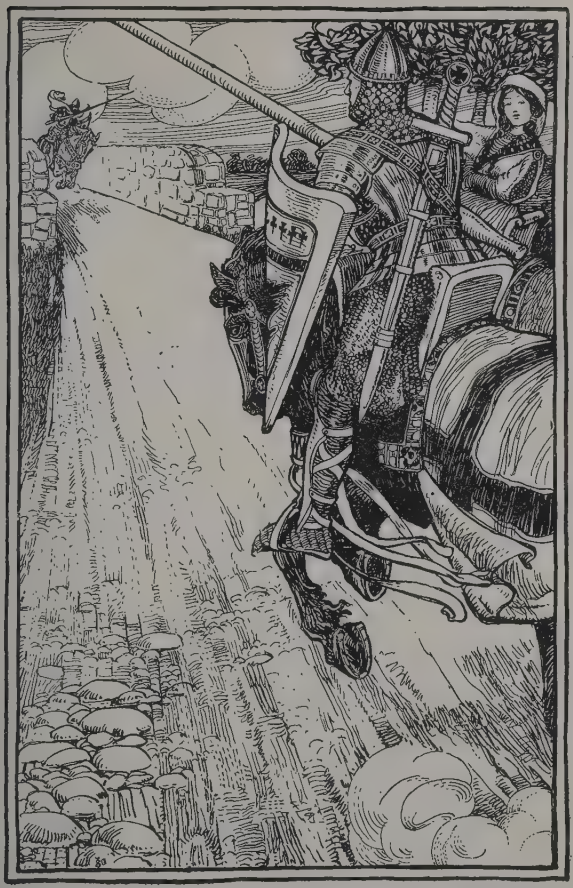
"Sir Kitchen Boy, although you are so low, I would like to save your life. Soon we are coming to one who will overthrow you; so turn back."

But Gareth refused. In a little while they came to the first circle of the river. The passing-place was spanned by a bridge. On the farther side of the bridge was a beautiful pavilion, draped in silk of gold and crimson colors. In front of it passed a warrior without armor.

"Damsel," he cried, "is this the knight you have brought from Arthur's Court to fight with me?"

"Ah!" she said, "the king scorns you so much that he has sent a kitchen boy to fight with you. Take care that he does not fall on you before you are armed, for he is a knave."

The warrior went inside his tent for



"Gareth rode at him fiercely"

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

his armor, and the damsel said to Gareth:

"Are you afraid?"

"Damsel," he said, "I am not afraid. I would rather fight twenty times than hear you speak so unkindly of me. Yet your cruel words have put strength into my arm. I shall fight well."

Then the knight came forth all in armor, and he said:

"Youth, you are a kitchen boy. Go back to your king; you are not fit to fight with me."

Gareth rode at him fiercely, saying:

"I am of nobler blood than you."

He fought so well that soon his enemy was overcome. Then Gareth said:

"Go to Arthur's Court and say that his kitchen boy sent you."

When the knight had departed, Gareth rode on, with the damsel in advance. After a little while she stopped her horse, and when he had caught up with her, she said:

"Youth, I do not smell the kitchen grease so much as I did."

Then she galloped off, laughing over

her shoulder, while Gareth followed her, a little more slowly.

When they reached the second circle of the river, the damsel said:

"Here is the brother of the knight you overthrew. He is stronger than the first. You had better go home, kitchen boy."

Gareth answered nothing. Out of the tent by the bridge which crossed the second circle of water, came a knight, clad in armor which glowed like the sun. Lynette shouted to him:

"I bring a kitchen boy who has overthrown your brother."

"Ah!" shouted the knight, and rode fiercely at Sir Gareth.

The two fought for a long time. The warrior was strong, but Sir Gareth was stronger, and at last overthrew him, and sent him back to Arthur's Court.

The damsel Lynette had ridden far ahead of him. When he came near her, she said:

"The knight's horse slipped, and that is why you overcame him. And now are you ready to fight with the third knight, for there he stands?"

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

At the third and innermost circle of the river stood the third knight, clad not in armor, but in hardened skins. Sir Gareth saw that he was more powerful than his brothers. The two at once began to fight on the bridge, but Sir Gareth's sword could not pierce the hard skins. Again and again he tried and failed. He grew tired, and began to fear that he should be conquered. But all at once, when his strokes were becoming feeble, Lynette cried out to him:

"Well done, good knight! You are no kitchen boy, but a brave lord. Strike for me! Do not lose. You are worthy to be a Knight of the Round Table."

When Sir Gareth heard this, he was so encouraged that he made a final great effort and threw his enemy over the bridge into the water. Then he turned to Lynette, saying:

"Lead; I follow."

But Lynette, proud now of her valiant escort, and humbled and ashamed at her misjudging of him, said:

"No, we shall ride side by side. I am very sorry I called you a kitchen

boy, for I know that you are a noble knight."

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

They rode happily side by side till dusk, when they came in sight of Castle Perilous. Just as they were about to cross the moat, a knight overtook them. It was Sir Lancelot, who had been delayed because he had stopped to help Sir Kay after Sir Gareth had thrown him from his horse.

The great knight, as he rode up to the two in the twilight, seeing only the shields which Sir Gareth had taken from the three knights, thought the young man was an enemy, and attacked him. Sir Lancelot was so strong that he soon overcame the youth.

As he fell, Lynette cried out in shame and sorrow, and Sir Gareth said:

"Oh, I am thrown."

Sir Lancelot knew Sir Gareth's voice, and raised him up, saying:

"I am Lancelot, and I am sorry to have overthrown you, my friend."

Sir Gareth said that it was no dishonor to be beaten by Sir Lancelot. Then the three rode into the castle, and there they

The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette

met the fourth knight, who was all covered with black armor.

Sir Lancelot wished to fight with him, but Sir Gareth would not permit it.

"This must be my adventure," he said.

Sir Gareth rode at the knight, expecting to meet a very strong man, but he easily unhorsed him. His enemy cried:

"Oh spare my life; I am not a knight."

Then he took off his helmet and showed the face of a young boy.

"My three brothers made me pretend to be a fierce knight," he explained. "They thought it would make people more afraid if they believed we were four strong knights."

Sir Lancelot and Sir Gareth laughed heartily, and so did Lynette. They took the boy into the castle, where Lynette's sister, Lyonors, who was now freed from her money-loving captors, greeted them with much joy. She put before them a great feast, and this time Sir Gareth and Lynette sat side by side. Afterwards a marriage was made between them, and they went to live with King Arthur in Camelot.

AMONG Arthur's Knights of the Round Table was one who was a mixture of good and bad, as indeed most people are. His name was Sir Ivaine; brave, kind-hearted, and merry; but at the same time fickle, sometimes forgetful of his promises, and inclined to make light of serious things.

One night, in the early spring, the knights and ladies of Arthur's Court were sitting in the dining-hall. The king and Guinevere had withdrawn, but were expected to return. Supper had been served, and the last course, consisting of pomegranate seeds and dates, had just been carried off. A fire had been built in the deep hearth, and the four bronze pillars in front were lighted by the flames. Four

Sir Ivaine little pages in blue and white velvet kirtles sat on stools watching the fire, and perhaps dreaming of the days when they, too, should be warriors and have adventures.

Sir Ivaine was telling of his experience with the Black Knight.

"It was when I was very young," he said; "indeed, I had just been made a knight. Some one told me of the wicked Black Knight who lived, and still lives, in a wood a long way from here. Knowing that he did much evil, I determined to kill him. I rode to the wood where he lived, and in which I found a marble platform. In the middle of it was a sunken space holding a fountain. I walked to this, and following the directions of some writing which was on the stone, picked up a cup that lay at hand, and filling it with water, poured it into the fountain.

"Then a great storm of wind and rain arose, and when it was at its height the Black Knight rode up and began to attack me. We fought for a little while, but he easily overthrew me. Thinking me dead, he rode back, leaving me on the

ground. But after a time I was able to mount my horse, and went back to my mother's castle." *Sir Ivaine*

At this moment the king and the queen entered, unperceived by any one except Sir Ivaine. The young man, who was always polite, sprang to his feet; then the other knights rose. Sir Kay, who was not always sweet-tempered, said to Sir Ivaine:

"We all know that you are very polite, but you have more courtesy than bravery."

At that Sir Ivaine said:

"I was almost a boy when the Black Knight overthrew me, but I could conquer him now."

"It is very easy to say that after you have eaten," said Sir Kay. "Almost any knight feels brave and self-satisfied when he has had a good supper of venison."

The king asked what the conversation was about, and Sir Ivaine repeated the story of his adventure, adding:

"And, Sir King, I crave your permission to set forth to-morrow to slay this Black Knight who is a pest in the land."

Sir Ivaine

"I have heard of this man," said the king, "and have often thought of sending some one to punish him. But he lives far away, and it has been necessary heretofore to right first the wrongs nearest home. Yet now his evil deeds and persecutions must cease. To-morrow a company of us will set forth and conquer him and all his people."

The king named some half-dozen of his knights, Sir Ivaine among them, who were to undertake this adventure.

Sir Ivaine was displeased; he thought that the adventure should be his alone. So he rose in the middle of the night and stole away unattended, determined to go in advance of the others and kill the Black Knight. It did not occur to him that in proving himself brave, he was also proving himself disobedient.

He rode forth in the darkness, humming merrily to himself. At daybreak he reached a valley, and as he went through it, saw a great serpent fighting with a lion. Sir Ivaine stopped to watch this curious combat. At first the two fighters seemed evenly matched, but

soon the huge serpent wrapped all its folds about the lion and began squeezing it to death. When Sir Ivaine saw this, he drew his sword and killed the serpent. *Sir Ivaine*

When the lion was free, it bounded up to Sir Ivaine, and he was afraid that it meant to kill him; but it fawned at his feet like a spaniel. He stroked it, and put his arms about its neck. When he mounted his horse, the beast followed him, refusing to go away. Then Sir Ivaine made up his mind that they were to be companions.

For many days the two kept close together, and at night Sir Ivaine would go to sleep with his head on the lion's neck. One day, as they came to a square castle set in a meadow, some people who stood on the castle walls began to shoot arrows at the lion, but Sir Ivaine stopped them, telling them that the animal was tame.

Then they told him that it was their rule that no one should pass by that castle without doing battle with their lord. Sir Ivaine told them that he was quite willing to obey their rule; so they opened

Sir Ivaine the castle gate. They said he must make his lion stay outside, but Sir Ivaine refused to do this. He promised, however, to make the lion lie down quietly; then the two were allowed to enter.

The courtyard was a large paved place, in which there were a score of armed men. Presently the lord of the castle came forward. This lord was much larger than Sir Ivaine, and the lion, on seeing him, began to lash its tail. But Sir Ivaine ordered it to be still, and it at once obeyed.

Then Sir Ivaine and the knight battled together. The knight was powerful, but Sir Ivaine was very agile and skillful. He was not able to strike so hard as could his enemy, but he was better able to avoid blows. Therefore it was not long before he got the advantage and overthrew the lord.

When this happened, the lord called for help, and ordered his armed men to kill Sir Ivaine. The whole twenty began to obey this treacherous order, but just as they were about to fall upon Sir Ivaine, the lion bounded among them, roaring savagely. With a few strokes of its pow-

"He dismounted and poured water into the fountain"

Sir Ivaine erful paws it disabled the men. Sir Ivaine told the lord of the castle that he must ride to Camelot and give himself up to Arthur to be judged for his treachery. Then Sir Ivaine rode away from the castle; and now that the lion had saved his life, he became very fond of the animal.

After many days of travel, Sir Ivaine reached the forest in the midst of which was the castle of the Black Knight. He rode to the platform of stone, dismounted and poured water into the fountain. As before, a storm arose, and at its height the Black Knight appeared.

He recognized the armor of Sir Ivaine, and said:

"Aha! I see I did not kill you before, but you shall not escape me this time."

"The best man shall win," said Sir Ivaine, cheerfully.

Then the two began a great combat. Their swords clashed so that the noise of the fountain was drowned; they fought so eagerly that they were not even aware of the storm. It was not long before the Black Knight began to grow weak from the many powerful and death-dealing

strokes from Sir Ivaine's sword. At last, seeing that he was mortally wounded, the Black Knight turned his horse and galloped in the direction of his castle. *Sir Ivaine*

Ordering the lion to stay where it had lain during the combat, Sir Ivaine followed. But he could not quite catch up with the Black Knight, although gaining on him inch by inch. By the time the castle moat was reached, Sir Ivaine was only five feet behind. The horses thundered one after the other over the bridge. The Black Knight rode under the portcullis, or sharp iron gate, which was raised. The instant he was inside, the portcullis fell, in order to shut out Sir Ivaine.

But Sir Ivaine had already passed beneath it, and as it fell his horse was cut in two. Even the long plume in Sir Ivaine's helmet was shorn off, and lay outside the gate.

Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet and drew his sword to renew his attack upon the Black Knight, but he was already dead, and lay across his panting horse's neck.

Then Sir Ivaine realized what his recklessness had cost him. There he was,

Sir Ivaine alone in a strange castle, the lord of which he had killed. Soon the people of the castle would come and capture him, for he could not escape, since the portcullis was down.

He ran into the castle, and up the stairs leading to the turret. He was fast growing weak from the wounds he had received, and his armor was heavy. Moreover, in spite of his care, it clashed at every step, and he was afraid some one would soon hear him. He had all but reached the top of the stairs when the door of the turret room opened, and a little maiden looked down upon him. He begged her not to cry out, and telling her who he was and what he had done, asked her to hide him.

"I will," she said, "because you are brave and you are wounded, and because you have killed that wicked tyrant, the Black Knight. He does not own this castle at all; it belongs to a beautiful lady, his cousin, who is my mistress. He keeps her here a prisoner because she will not marry him."

Then the little maiden led him into

the turret room. She concealed his armor in a hole in the side of the wall, and told him to hide himself between the two mattresses of the bed. Before he had time to do so, however, they heard a great noise in the courtyard, and looking down, saw that the body of the Black Knight had been discovered. Near it stood a beautiful lady, more beautiful than any Sir Ivaine had ever seen, except Queen Guinevere. She was dark like the queen, and her eyes were as bright as stars. He would have looked at her a long time, but the little maiden begged him to hide without delay. *Sir Ivaine*

"Quick!" she cried. "The men have seen that there is the front part of a horse inside the gate, and know that the person who has killed our lord must be here. Even now they have begun the search, for they all love the Black Knight, although my mistress does not, and they will hang you if they find you."

So Sir Ivaine crept between the mattresses, and the little maiden hurried down the stairs and went to her beautiful mistress. Presently Sir Ivaine heard

Sir Ivaine men tramping up the turret steps. They often stopped, trying all the doors they came to, and at last entered the room in which he lay. One of them, peering into the hole in the wall where his armor was, said:

"Here is armor."

But another replied:

"That is some that once was used by our master; there is no need to drag it into the light."

Then they searched among all the furnishings of the room, but found no one. At last, as they were leaving, one of the men thrust his sword twice through the mattress. The second thrust cut deeply into Sir Ivaine's arm; but as the knight was brave, he did not utter a cry.

When the men had gone, he crept out, and found that the cut in his arm and his other wounds were bleeding badly. Just then the little maiden came in with food. She cried out in alarm when she saw the blood, and quickly tore a piece of linen from her robe for bandages. When all the wounds had been carefully attended to, she gave him a plentiful supper

and promised to take care of him until there was a good opportunity for him to escape. *Sir Ivaine*

She visited him every morning, and told him the day's news in the castle. He learned that a lion kept roaring about the walls, and that the bowmen had tried to kill it, but could not. Sir Ivaine was sure that it was his lion, and longed to have it, but knew that this was impossible. And she told him how the people of the castle had been angry at their lady because she would not marry the Black Knight; but now that he was dead, acknowledged her as mistress and obeyed her in everything. The little maiden said she thought that if the lady were told that Sir Ivaine was hidden she would probably see that he had a safe conduct out of the castle.

"I want never to leave this castle," said Sir Ivaine; "for I love your lady."

This pleased the little maiden, for she had learned to respect Sir Ivaine. So she went to the lady of the castle and told her all about the stranger. The lady had Sir Ivaine moved to a rich apartment

Sir Ivaine where she could visit him often and help the little maid in her care of him. She did not tell her people, however, that this stranger knight had killed their lord.

As Sir Ivaine recovered, he soon found courage to tell her how beautiful she was, and that he loved her more than anything in the world. He said that if she would marry him, he would stay with her forever, and never seek for more adventures. All he asked was that she would let in his lion, which still continued to roar outside the castle walls. When the lady heard the story of the lion, it seemed to her that if Sir Ivaine were so kind to an animal, he would probably be much kinder to her.

So she said that she would marry him. The people of the castle saw and liked him, and agreed to obey him as their lord. When they were told that the lion they had tried to kill belonged to him and must be admitted to the castle, they showed some fear. Sir Ivaine told them that there was no need of this, for the beast was very gentle, and was making noise only because of its desire for its master.

He went outside the castle walls and called. Soon there was heard a loud roaring; a big yellow body bounded out of the forest, and the lion came leaping to its master's feet. It frisked about him, and rubbed its head on his arm, just as a favorite dog might do. When the people saw how tame it was, they were no longer afraid. *Sir Ivaine*

Sir Ivaine and the beautiful lady were soon married, and for a long time everyone was very happy. Sir Ivaine sent a letter to King Arthur telling the result of his adventure. Soon the messenger returned bearing rich gifts from the king and Guinevere, and an invitation to come to Camelot whenever they wished to. The lady, however, persuaded Sir Ivaine to promise to remain with her in her castle.

One day a party of the Knights of the Round Table rode into the courtyard. They were going on a great adventure, and stopped by the way to see how Sir Ivaine and his beautiful wife fared. When Sir Ivaine saw them, all his old-time love of fighting came back, and he

Sir Ivaine went to his lady and begged her to let him go with the knights.

"Ah, my Ivaine," she said, "you told me that you would never leave me."

"A knight ought to seek adventures," he said. "And I will return to you."

She paused for a while and then said:

"I will let you go if you will promise to come back in a year and a day; that is, next Whitsuntide."

He gladly promised, and she said:

"If you break this promise, I will never see you again."

But Sir Ivaine was sure he would not break the promise, because he loved her too much for that.

So off he rode with the knights, followed by his faithful lion. The lady and the little maiden waved farewells to Sir Ivaine from the tower until they could no longer see him; then they again took up the life they had lived before he came to the castle.

Sir Ivaine rode with the knights for many months, and had many adventures. At last, just as the year was drawing to a close, he started homeward. On the

way, however, he stopped at Arthur's Court to pay his respects to the king and the queen. They both remembered him and greeted him kindly. *Sir Ivaine*

A great tournament was being held at that time in Camelot, and the king asked Sir Ivaine if he would like to take part. Sir Ivaine was pleased, for he loved the display of such combats. During the three days of the tournament he distinguished himself greatly.

On the evening of the third day, as the knights were sitting in the great hall of the Round Table, a little maiden entered. She went up to King Arthur and gave him a ring.

"This ring," she said, "is one Sir Ivaine gave my lady. She returns it, and has vowed never to see him again because he has broken his promise to her."

Then, before any one could stop her, she left the hall, mounted her horse, and rode away. Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet, staring wildly. Whitsuntide had fallen on the first day of the tournament, his year and a day had more than passed, and he had forgotten his promise!

Sir Ivaine

He rushed from the hall and down the hill through the streets of Camelot, out of the city gate, and into the forest. He ran on and on until he fell exhausted.

The next day he awoke in a fever, and would have died but for his faithful lion. The poor animal tried to make Sir Ivaine rise, but seeing that he could not, dragged him to the edge of a brook, where he could drink when he was thirsty. The lion also brought him game. At first Sir Ivaine would not touch it, but finally began to eat it raw.

After a time he became better, physically, but his senses were gone. In his madness he wandered all through the woods, fighting with the trees and bushes. The lion always followed him, protecting him from other animals and from men.

One day when the lion was absent finding food, Sir Ivaine lay asleep. A good hermit came up to him, and pitying his condition, lifted him in his arms and carried him to his hut. He bathed the poor knight, cut his hair, and put a robe upon him. He was laying him upon a

bed when the lion came roaring to the door and dashed it open. *Sir Ivaine*

When it saw the hermit tending its master, it fawned at his feet. After that Sir Ivaine spent much of his time in the hut. The lion supplied him with food, bringing meat to the hermit, who always divided it into four parts: three parts he gave to the lion, and one he cooked for Sir Ivaine and himself.

Sometimes Sir Ivaine would run away from the hermit and wander for days in the forest. The lion took care of him, and always led him back to the hermit's hut. Once, however, Sir Ivaine set forth in the direction of his wife's castle. At night the lion tried to take him to the hut, but in vain. For days he wandered, always in the same direction, until at last he reached the wood where the stone platform was. He laid himself down upon it and slept. Soon a lady and a maid appeared. The lion sprang at them, but when it reached their feet, it licked the lady's hand, for she was its mistress.

It took her robe in its teeth and pulled her gently to the spot where Sir Ivaine

Sir Ivaine lay. At first she would not look at him, because she had not forgiven him for breaking his promise. But the little maiden said:

"Dear mistress, look at him. The story which the knights of Arthur's Court told us about his madness must be true. If you will but look at his face you will see that it is the face of a man who has lost his senses."

Then the lady knelt beside him. When she saw his worn features and his tattered garments, she began to believe that he really had lost his senses from grief. She sent the little maiden to the castle for an ointment she had. It was so powerful that if it were rubbed over a person who was ill, it would cure him, no matter what his disease was. When the little maid brought it, the lady put it upon Sir Ivaine, but so gently as not to rouse him.

After several hours, Sir Ivaine awoke. At first he hardly knew where he was, but soon he recollected all that had happened, and seeing his lady near, begged her to forgive him. This she did, and they were reconciled. Sir Ivaine was

sure that he would never again forget to keep a promise. *Sir Ivaine*

For some months they lived very happily in the castle. Then they went to Camelot in order to be near to Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

IN Arthur's Court there dwelt a poor knight named Balin, who had accidentally killed the cousin of King Arthur, and had been taken to the court of the king for trial. He had lived there almost as a prisoner for six months, until it was decided that he had not meant to do wrong. All his money was gone, and his clothes and armor were poor. He was sorry for this, but he was still more sorry that he was not doing brave deeds like the other knights.

One day when he sat in the great hall at Camelot, looking at the shields which were carved or covered with gold, a

damsel entered who wore a rich mantle, trimmed with fur. As Arthur and the knights looked at her, she let it fall to the floor, and they saw that she wore a heavy sword. *Sir Balin*

"Damsel," said Arthur, "why do you, a maiden, wear a sword?"

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I should be glad if I did not wear it. It is very heavy, and causes me pain. But I am forced to wear it until I meet a knight who can take it from me."

"Surely many knights could do that, and gladly," the lords said.

"No," said the lady. "It seems that there is but one knight in all the world who is to take the sword. I heard that there were brave knights at the Court of King Rience, the enemy of King Arthur, and I went there. Yet no one could unfasten the sword. Now am I come here on the same errand."

"In truth, damsel," said the king, "you are right welcome. My knights shall try to take your weapon."

Then, at a sign from Arthur, a knight stepped forward. But, even though he

Sir Balin exerted all his strength, the sword could not be unfastened.

"Sir, you need not pull so hard," said the damsel. "The one who is to take the sword will do so easily."

All the knights tried except Sir Balin, who stood back because of his poor clothes. Yet he wanted very much to see if he was the chosen knight, and just as the damsel was going away, he said:

"Damsel, will you let me try? I am poorly clothed, but my heart tells me that I may succeed."

The damsel saw that he had a good face. But his clothes were so poor she doubted if he were really a knight.

"I am afraid you will fail," she said.

"Ah, maiden," he returned, "poor clothes are but the outside. Good deeds are just as worthy, whether done by a rich person or a poor one. Many a man who is badly clothed has real valor and kindness."

"That is very true," she said; "so try, good sir."

Then Sir Balin seized the hilt of the sword, and the weapon came away easily.

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"She wore a heavy sword"

All the lords wondered, and the lady said: *Sir Balin*

"You are a good knight, the best I have met. You shall do many brave deeds. And now, give me my sword again."

"No," said Sir Balin, "I should like to keep this sword, for I have no other."

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I am sorry to hear these words, for now I must give you the sword."

"Surely he deserves it," said Arthur, "for it weighed heavily on you."

"Yes," she replied, "but it is a misfortune for him to keep it. He shall slay with it the best friend he has in the world. It is going to prove his destruction."

Sir Balin would not believe her.

"I could not slay my best friend," he said. "Besides, I am willing to meet whatever happens, and I wish to keep the sword."

Then the maiden departed in great sorrow, while Balin said to the king:

"My lord, give me permission to leave your court."

"I do not like to lose you," said the

Sir Balin king. "Perhaps you are angry because you were in prison so long. You must know that it takes time to find out who is innocent and who is guilty."

"My lord," answered Sir Balin, "I know it is not wise to make a judgment hastily, and I do not blame you for keeping me in prison. I love you, and wish to leave your court that I may do some deed worthy of the Round Table."

Then Arthur said that he might go. Soon a servant brought to Balin a fine horse and good armor which were the gifts of the king. Balin at once took leave of Arthur and the knights, and rode away, singing as he rode, for he was very happy. Sometimes he stopped to lift up his shield and admire it. It had a blue emblem upon it, and to Sir Balin's eyes its beauty was that of the sky, the soft blue of heaven.

Sir Balin rode until he was tired. At last, from the crest of a hill, he saw a gloomy stone castle, and galloped towards it joyfully, hoping to rest there.

At a turn of the road, he saw a cross with gold letters upon it. He stopped to

read the words, which were: "Let no knight go to the castle, for great danger is there." *Sir Balin*

"Oh," said Sir Balin, "I am used to danger. I fear nothing," and he went on.

Presently an old man started up beside the road. He had a long gray beard, and was dressed in a long gray robe that sparkled with little specks of frost. The old man said to Sir Balin:

"Did you not read the letters on the cross?"

"Yes," replied Sir Balin, "but I am not afraid."

"Oh, Sir Balin, you of all men should fear to go to that castle," the old man said.

"Why?" he asked in amazement. "Nevertheless, I shall go."

"Sir Balin, Sir Balin!" cried the old man after him, "you are too self-willed. You will be very sorry for what you have done before you die."

But Sir Balin rode on without fear, and soon reached the gate of the castle. A hundred beautiful ladies and many knights welcomed him. They took off his armor and put a rich crimson cloak

Sir Balin upon his shoulders. Then they led him into a banquet hall where there was music and dancing. They set food before him, and he ate, thankfully. He was very happy, feeling sure that he could rest here for many days.

Just as he was thinking this, the lady who was mistress of the castle said:

"Sir knight, it is the rule of this castle that every lord who comes here as a guest must fight."

"That is a hard custom," said Sir Balin.

"Yet you need fight but once," answered the lady. "We have here the knight who entered just before you came."

"Alas!" said Sir Balin, "I would rather not fight, for I wish to rest. Since such is the custom of the castle, however, I must do my part. Let some one bring my armor."

A servant at once came up to him with a suit of black armor.

"This is not my armor," said Sir Balin. "My armor is not painted black. It is honest gray steel, decorated with blue."

"It is the custom of the castle to wear

black," they told him. "This armor is as good as your own." *Sir Balin*

Sir Balin felt sad, he could hardly tell why; and was very sorry that he had ever come to the castle. Putting on the armor, however, he went into the courtyard and mounted his horse. No sooner was he ready than another knight, clad all in black, entered the courtyard.

The two knights rode together so fiercely that the shock threw them both off their horses in a swoon. After a time they recovered and began to fight on foot, pressing each other near the walls of the castle.

Sir Balin was fighting with the sword that he had taken from the damsel in King Arthur's Court. It was a strong sword, and whenever it struck, the armor of his opponent cracked. They fought till their breath failed, and then they rested. Each knew that never before had he dealt with such a strong enemy.

Then they fought again, and gave each other seven deep wounds, the least of which would prove fatal. All the ground was red with blood, but Sir Balin fought

Sir Balin on still, for the people of the castle were watching from the walls, and he wished to be thought a great warrior. So at last he used all his remaining strength and gave the other knight such a hard blow that he fell to the ground. Sir Balin knew that it was a death stroke. He felt that he, too, was about to die, and said:

"Who are you? I never fought with such a strong knight before."

The other answered faintly:

"I am Sir Balan, the brother to the good knight Sir Balin."

Then Sir Balin cried out:

"Alas, alas! that I should live to see this day!" and he fell backward in a swoon.

Sir Balan was dying, but he crawled on his hands and knees to where Sir Balin lay, and took off his helmet only to discover the face of his brother. Then he wept bitterly till Sir Balin recovered from his swoon.

"Alas!" said Sir Balan, "if we had but worn our own armor we should have known each other. And now we must die; we have killed each other."

"They fought till their breath failed"

Sir Balin Sir Balin was too full of remorse to weep.

"All this is my fault," he said. "As the old man on the road told me, I have been too self-willed. First, I would have the damsel's sword, although she told me that I should slay with it the best friend I had. That is you, Balan. And then I would enter this castle in spite of warnings. I deserve to die, but it is a hard punishment that I should have killed you, my brother."

Soon some ladies came from the wall into the courtyard, and to them Sir Balin said:

"We are two dear brothers who have killed each other. I pray you, promise to bury us in the same grave."

The ladies wept as they made the promise. The two brothers put their arms about each other and waited for death. They hoped to die together, but Sir Balan died first. Soon after, when Sir Balin had also died, the ladies buried them together, and put a stone above the grave, telling the sad story of their combat and death.

ONE of the bravest knights in King Arthur's Court was Sir Geraint. Once he was in the forest with Queen Guinevere and one of her maidens, when a lady, a knight, and a dwarf rode by. The queen told the maiden to go to the dwarf and ask who his master was.

As the maiden approached them, she saw that the knight had a very proud face. She asked the dwarf his master's name, but he said, roughly:

"I do not know."

"If you do not know," answered the maiden, "I will ask him myself."

She started to ride up to the knight, but the dwarf struck at her with his whip. Upon this, she went back and told the

Sir Geraint and Enid

queen and Sir Geraint what had passed. Sir Geraint was very angry, and he said to the queen:

"Fair queen, I will ride after this knight and his dwarf and avenge the insult done to your maiden. If I succeed, I shall return in three days."

"Do so," said the queen, "and I trust you will succeed, not only in this, but in all things which you attempt. Some day you will love some fair lady. Before you marry her, bring her to me, and no matter how poor or how rich she may be, I will clothe her for her wedding in the most beautiful garments in the world. They shall shine like the sun."

So off rode Sir Geraint, keeping at some distance behind the lady, the knight, and the dwarf. At last, after passing through many woods, he lost sight of them as they disappeared beyond the top of a hill. Sir Geraint rode up, and saw below him, in a valley, the one street of a little town. On one side was a fortress, so new that the stone of which it was built was still white; while on the other side stood a gray old castle, fast falling

into decay. He saw the three people he was following enter the fortress. *Sir Geraint and Enid*

In the little town there was a great deal of noise and bustle. At first Sir Geraint could not find any place to stay, for the houses were all full. He stopped before a servant who was scouring his master's armor, and asked what all the noise meant. The servant said:

"The Sparrow-hawk," and went on working.

Then he met an old man carrying a sack of corn, and asked him the same question. The old man made the same reply. Next Sir Geraint approached one who was making armor, and questioned him. Without looking up the man replied:

"Friend, he who works for the Sparrow-hawk has little time for answering questions."

Sir Geraint was vexed, and said:

"I am weary of hearing of your Sparrow-hawk. I do not understand what you mean. Will you not tell me where I can find a place to stay for to-night? And will you not sell me some armor? I have but my sword."

Sir Geraint and Enid

Then the man looked up, and said:

"Your pardon, sir. We are all very busy here, for to-morrow we hold a tournament, and our work is not half done. I cannot give you armor, for we need all that we have in the town. As to lodging, all the room is taken. However, perhaps Earl Iniol in the castle will receive you."

Sir Geraint rode over to the gray old castle, and as the gate was open, entered the ruined courtyard. Dismounting, he went into the hall. Here he found the earl, an elderly man dressed in clothes which had once been handsome, but were now old and worn. To him Sir Geraint said:

"Good sir, I seek lodging for the night."

The old Earl Iniol answered:

"Sir, I was once rich and am now poor; nevertheless, I will gladly give you the best I have."

As he spoke, some one in the castle began to sing. The voice was very sweet. Sir Geraint thought he had never heard anyone sing so wonderfully.

"That is my daughter Enid," said the earl.

Sir Geraint and Enid

Then he took Sir Geraint into a room in which sat an old lady in a faded velvet gown. She was the earl's wife. By her side stood Enid in a faded silk gown. She was as beautiful as her voice was sweet, and after watching her, Sir Geraint said to himself:

"I already love this maiden."

He said nothing out loud, only looked at her. Earl Iniol spoke to her:

"Enid, this good knight will stay with us. His horse is in the courtyard; take it to the stall and give it corn. Then go into the town and buy us some food."

Sir Geraint wished to put away his horse himself, but the old earl said:

"Sir, we are very poor, but we cannot permit our guest to do any work. I pray you, stay here."

So Enid took the horse to the stall. After that, she went into the town and soon returned with meat and sweet cakes. Then, because most of the rooms in the old castle were in ruins, she cooked the meat in the same hall in which they were to eat. When the meal was ready, she waited on her father and her mother and Sir Geraint.

Sir Geraint and Enid

The knight watched her and loved her more and more.

When they had risen from the table, he said to the earl:

"My lord, pray tell me what the people of this town mean when they speak of the Sparrow-hawk."

The earl's face grew sad, as he said:

"That is the name given to the young knight who rules in this town."

"Does he live in the fortress?" asked Sir Geraint. "And do a lady and a dwarf ride with him?"

"Yes," said the earl.

"Ah, then he is the man I am in search of," said Sir Geraint. "I must fight with him before three days are over. I am Geraint of King Arthur's Court."

"I know your name well," said the earl. "We often hear of your great deeds at Camelot. Many times have I related to my Enid the story of your brave deeds."

"I am bound to do my duty with the other knights," answered Sir Geraint. "And now tell me more of this Sparrow-hawk."

Sir Geraint and Enid

"Alas! he is my nephew," said the earl. "At one time I ruled this town. My nephew, the Sparrow-hawk, was powerful, too, and he asked to unite our power by marrying Enid, but neither she nor I wished it. Then he collected a body of men and attacked me, and took all my wealth, leaving me nothing but this old castle."

"To-morrow," said Sir Geraint, "I will fight in the tournament with this Sparrow-hawk, and conquer him, and give you back your lands. But I lack armor."

"I can give you armor, although it is old and rusty," said the earl. "But no one is allowed to fight in this tournament unless there is some lady he loves best in all the world. Then he fights for the sake of this lady, and if he wins, receives the prize, which he in turn gives to her."

"What is the prize?" asked Sir Geraint.

"A hawk, a sparrow-hawk made of gold. This nephew of mine is very strong and has always overcome every knight who has opposed him in these tournaments, which are held yearly. It is because he has won the prize so often that he is called

Sir Geraint and Enid

the Sparrow-hawk. But tell me, is there some lady whom you love?"

Then Sir Geraint said:

"I love this child of yours, my lord, and will gladly make her my wife if you will permit it."

The earl was very glad, but Enid was afraid, for she thought she was not worthy of such a great knight. Yet, she knew she loved him, and said so, and soon promised to go with him to Arthur's Court within three days.

The next morning, the earl and Sir Geraint and Enid went to the field where the tournament was to take place. Many knights and ladies were there. The ladies sat under a pavilion which was draped in purple velvet ornamented with gold, while the knights were on horseback. A herald blew a trumpet, and the knight who was called the Sparrow-hawk galloped into the field.

He rode around it three times, and then went up to the pavilion and said to his lady:

"I give you the gold sparrow-hawk again, because no one dares to fight with me for it."

Sir Geraint and Enid

Then Sir Geraint rode forward in his rusty armor and said:

"I will fight with you."

The knight looked upon him, and gave a very scornful laugh as he rode at Sir Geraint. The two clashed together and began to fight fiercely, while all the people watched. Twice they had to stop and rest. For a long time they seemed evenly matched, and no one could decide which would win. But when Sir Geraint looked to where Enid sat in her faded silk gown among the richly dressed ladies in the pavilion, he grew very strong and struck his enemy such a blow that he fell to the earth.

"Now, Sparrow-hawk," said Sir Geraint, "I have overthrown you. You must do two things: you must ride with your lady and your dwarf to Arthur's Court and ask pardon of Queen Guinevere because your dwarf struck her maiden; and you must restore all the riches you have taken from your good uncle, Earl Iniol."

This the knight promised to do. And afterwards, in Arthur's Court, he grew very sorry for his evil deeds, and became a good man.

Sir Geraint and Enid

Meanwhile, Enid was making ready to go to Arthur's Court with Sir Geraint. She was sorry that she had only her robe of faded silk. She remembered a robe her mother had given her before the Sparrow-hawk took their riches. It was of velvet, the color of mother-of-pearl, with gold leaves and flowers and birds embroidered upon it.

While she was thinking of this beautiful robe, her mother entered the room, carrying it. Enid gave a cry of joy, and her mother told her that the Sparrow-hawk had just given it back, together with other robes and gold and jewels. "Put it on, Enid," she said, and helped her daughter to array herself in the handsome gown, exclaiming: "How beautiful you look, my dear child! Sir Geraint may well be proud to fetch such a fair lady to King Arthur's Court."

Just then the earl entered to tell them that the knight wanted Enid to ride with him to Camelot in the faded silk dress in which he had first seen her.

Enid, although she was deeply disappointed, at once put on again her faded

gown. When Sir Geraint came in he saw that the earl's wife was also disappointed, so he told them that the queen had promised to dress his bride in the most beautiful robes in the world for her wedding. At this both the ladies were much pleased. *Sir Geraint and Enid*

So after bidding farewell to her parents, Enid rode with Sir Geraint to Camelot, where the queen welcomed her, and gave her a robe that was as bright as the sun. Then the good Archbishop of Canterbury married Sir Geraint and Enid amid great rejoicings.

ARTHUR AND SIR ACCALON

THERE was a woman in Arthur's Court named Morgan le Fay, who had learned a great deal about magic. She was a wicked woman, and hated the king because he was more powerful than she, and because he was so good.

However, she pretended to be a true friend to him, and the king believed in her. One day when they were talking together, she asked him if he would not let her take charge of his wonderful sword Excalibur, and its scabbard. She said that she would guard them so carefully that they would never be stolen. As she was very eager, Arthur granted her request.

One day in time of peace, King Arthur went out hunting with a certain knight

named Sir Accalon, who was the lover of Morgan le Fay. They rode for a long time, and when they were tired, stopped to rest beside a great lake. As they looked over its shining waters, they saw a beautiful little ship, which sailed straight towards them, and ran up to the sands at their feet. It was all covered with golden silks, which waved in the gentle wind. King Arthur and Sir Accalon climbed into it and examined it thoroughly, but they found no one on board.

Arthur and Sir Accalon

They rested on two couches which were on the deck, until it grew dark. Then they were about to return home, when all at once, a hundred torches, set on the sides of the ship were lighted, and suddenly there appeared twelve beautiful damsels who told the two that they were welcome, and that they should be served with a banquet.

Presently the maidens led the king and the knight into a room which had a table covered with a white cloth embroidered in purple. It bore many golden dishes, and each dish had a beautiful design carved upon it. Some dishes had

Arthur and Sir Accalon

vine-leaves, others ivy-leaves; some had angels with long robes sweeping back in graceful lines; and all these dishes held choice food. The king and Sir Accalon ate to their hearts' content.

Then the damsels led them into two separate chambers. King Arthur was tired and so sleepy that he gave but one glance at his bedroom. He saw that it was hung in red silk embroidered with gold dragons and griffins. Then he threw himself on his bed and slept very soundly.

When he awoke, he found himself not in the pretty bed-chamber, but in a dark place. He could see nothing, but all about him he heard the sound of complaining and weeping. He was much bewildered, but in a moment he cried:

"What is this? Where am I?"

Then a voice answered:

"You are in prison, as we are."

"Who are you?" asked Arthur.

The voice replied:

"We are twenty knights, prisoners, and some of us have been here as long as seven years. We are in the dungeons of a wicked lord named Sir Damas. He has

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"The room was hung in red silk embroidered with gold dragons and griffins"

a younger brother, and the two brothers are enemies, quarreling about their inheritance. Now the younger brother, Sir Ontzlake, is very strong, but Sir Damas is not strong, and moreover, he is a coward. So he tries to find a knight who will fight for him against Sir Ontzlake. *Arthur and Sir Accalon*

"But Sir Damas is so much hated that no one will fight for him. So he goes about the country with a body of rough men, and whenever he sees a knight, he captures him. Then he asks him to fight with Sir Ontzlake. So far, all the knights have refused, and have been thrown into prison. We do not have food enough, but we would rather die here than fight for Sir Damas, who is so wicked."

At that moment a damsel entered the prison with a torch, which faintly lighted the dismal place, and advanced to the king.

"Sir," she said, "will you fight for my lord, Sir Damas? If you will, you shall be taken from this prison. If you will not, you shall die here."

Arthur considered for some time, and then said:

"I would rather fight than die in prison.

Arthur and Sir Accalon

If I fight, will you deliver also all these prisoners?"

The damsel promised, and Arthur consented to fight. While she went to tell Sir Damas, Arthur said to the other prisoners:

"My friends, I do not know Sir Damas, and I do not know Sir Ontzlake. I do not know whether they are bad or good But I will fight, and then, when I have conquered, I shall judge between them, and do justice to both."

"That is a good plan," said the knights, "but why are you so sure that you will conquer?"

"I am Arthur, the King," he replied.

At that the knights set up a great cry of joy, and the king continued:

"I shall send for my good sword Excalibur and the scabbard, and with these I shall surely win."

So when Arthur and the knights were led out of prison, the king sent the damsel who had visited them to Morgan le Fay for his sword and scabbard.

Meantime, the knight who had accompanied Arthur on the little ship, Sir Accalon, also awoke. He found himself in

the palace of Morgan le Fay, and he wondered very much where Arthur was. He went to the lady, who said to him: *Arthur and Sir Accalon*

"My dear lord, the day has come when you can have great power if you want it. Should you like to be king of this land, instead of Arthur?"

Now Sir Accalon was a traitor at heart. He wanted very much to be king, even if the good Arthur was to be killed; so he said:

"Yes, truly."

Then she said:

"You shall be king, and I shall be your queen. All you need to do is to fight a great battle, which you shall win. I have been using my magic. It was I who sent the ship of silk to you and Arthur. I had him put into prison, and I had you brought here."

Sir Accalon wondered very much. Then she told him of the fight King Arthur was to make against Sir Ontzlake.

"But I have caused Sir Ontzlake to fall sick," she said, "and he cannot fight. I shall go with you to his castle and you can offer to fight for him."

Arthur and Sir Accalon

"I to fight with the king!" cried Sir Accalon. "He would surely overthrow me."

"He cannot," said Morgan le Fay, "because you are to fight with his sword. A little while ago he sent to me for Excalibur and the scabbard, but I returned him a false sword which looks like Excalibur, and a false scabbard. You shall take the true ones, and then you shall surely overcome him and rule this land."

Then Sir Accalon was glad, and he hastened with the lady to the castle of Sir Ontzlake. They found him groaning because he was ill and because Sir Damas had sent him a challenge to fight with a knight, and he could not accept it. He was much relieved when Morgan le Fay told him that Sir Accalon would fight in his place.

Early in the afternoon, King Arthur and Sir Accalon rode into the field where the combat was to be held. Arthur did not know who Sir Accalon was, nor did any one else, except Morgan le Fay. Two sides of the field were full of people who came to watch, half of whom were friends

of Sir Damas, and the other half were friends of Sir Ontzlake. *Arthur and Sir Accalon*

Arthur and Sir Accalon rode at each other so furiously that at the shock of the meeting both fell off their horses. Then they began to fight fiercely with their swords. The king could make no headway with his false steel, but whenever Sir Accalon struck at Arthur he drew blood.

The king was much amazed. He grew weaker and weaker, but still he kept on his feet. Those who watched him were sorry for him; they thought they had never seen a man fight so bravely. At last Arthur's sword broke, and fell in two pieces on the ground. When Sir Accalon saw this, he cried:

"Now, yield to me."

"I will never yield," said the king, "and if you do not get me another sword, you will be shamed before all men, for it is an unknightly thing to fight with a defenseless man."

"I do not care," said Sir Accalon. "If you will not yield, defend yourself with your shield as best you can."

He rushed at the king. Arthur was so

Arthur and Sir Accalon

weak that he could hardly stand, but he guarded himself as well as he could with his shield. Soon he could do no more, and fell to the ground.

At this moment the Lady of the Lake, who had given Arthur his sword, came upon the field. She was invisible, but anyone who had listened intently could have heard a sound like the ripple of water as she walked. She caused Excalibur to fall out of the hand of Sir Accalon and drop near Arthur.

When it fell, Arthur saw that it was his own Excalibur. He grasped its handle and some of his strength came back. He struggled to his feet, and rushing up to Sir Accalon, seized the scabbard of Excalibur and threw it far over the field.

"Now," he said, "send for a second sword and fight with me."

Then Sir Accalon was afraid. Yet he thought that Arthur was so weak that he could still be overcome. So he sent for a second sword, and they began to fight again. Arthur's strength, however, had largely returned, and in a short time he gave Sir Accalon a mortal stroke.

Sir Accalon fell to the ground, and the king, leaning over him, cried: *Arthur and Sir Accalon*

"Tell me who you are."

Then Sir Accalon was filled with remorse, and he said:

"Oh, my king, I have been a traitor to you, but now I am dying, and I am sorry for what I have done. I deserve my death."

He told the king his name, and all about his treachery, and that of Morgan le Fay.

King Arthur was sad.

"It is very hard to be deceived in a friend," he said, "but I forgive you freely. I will try to cure your wound, and sometime I shall trust you again."

"You cannot cure me," said Sir Accalon. "I am dying. Let them carry me off the field."

So he was taken to a neighboring abbey, while the people crowded about the king to congratulate him, but Arthur said:

"I am sad at heart. My victory is no comfort to me, for to-day I have lost a friend whom I believed true."

Arthur and Sir Accalon

Then he called the two brothers, Sir Damas and Sir Ontzlake, and judged their cause. He decided that their property must be divided equally between them, and that they must be friends. They promised never to quarrel again. Arthur told them that they must be kind to other knights and to all people. He said that if he heard that they were not, he would come and punish them.

After this, Sir Damas gave back to the twenty knights all their money, and they went on their way rejoicing. King Arthur mounted his horse and rode over to the abbey, where he sat by the bed of Sir Accalon till the poor knight died. Then the king went back alone to his Court at Camelot.

HOW ARTHUR FOUGHT WITH A GIANT

ONCE upon a time King Arthur and some of his knights were sailing in a ship. The king, being tired, went to sleep in his cabin, and began to dream. It seemed to him that he was sailing with his people when a great dragon flew out of the west. This dragon had a blue head and a gold back. Underneath he shone like a rainbow. Flames of fire rushed out of his mouth and covered land and sea.

As he flew, there came out of the east a great bear, very rough, and as black as coal, and with wings that flapped like windmills. The bear and the dragon roared loudly, and they began to fight and struggle till the sea was all red with blood. At last the dragon conquered.

When the king awoke from this dream

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

he sent for Merlin and told him of it, and asked for an explanation.

"My lord," Merlin replied, "the dragon betokens yourself; the colors on its body are signs of your glory. The bear betokens some tyrant who torments the people and whom you will slay."

Soon after this, the ship in which the company was, came in sight of land. When they had anchored, the knights noticed on the beach a crowd of people who were weeping. Descending from the ship, Arthur asked one of the men what troubled them, and what was the name of their country.

"Good sir," returned the man, "this is the country of Brittany, and we weep because our country is desolated by a giant. He makes us bring him food. First, he ate up all the oxen we had, and then our horses. Next he demanded our children, and now there are no little ones in the land. To-day he took our good duchess of Brittany, and carried her off to his mountain."

"Alas!" said the king. "It grieves me to hear this, not only because a cruel deed has been done, but because the duchess of

Brittany is my cousin's wife. I must save this lady. I will fight with the giant."

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

"Good sir," cried the people in amazement, "it is not possible! A whole company of us dare not attack him, and yet we account ourselves brave men."

"That may well be," replied Arthur, "and yet with my good sword and scabbard, I have no fear."

Then the men said:

"If you will go, my lord, yonder is the great mountain where the giant lives. At the top, two huge fires burn continually in front of a cave, and in that cave are greater treasures than you can dream of. They are all yours if you will but slay this monster."

Arthur replied nothing to them, but called Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and rode with them to the foot of the mountain. From that point he ascended alone. When he was nearly to the top he came upon a woman, clad all in black, who sat weeping by the side of a newly-made grave.

"Good woman, why do you weep?" asked Arthur.

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

"Hush, hush!" she cried, "or the giant will hear you and come and kill you. He can hear me, but the sound of weeping delights him, and therefore I need not restrain my grief."

"Why do you grieve?" the king asked.

"Alas! Because my good mistress, the duchess of Brittany, is dead. The giant has killed her."

At that Arthur gripped tightly the handle of his sword and said:

"I will kill this wretch before I am an hour older."

"Ah, my lord," said the woman, "the greatest kings in the country are afraid of him. He has a coat embroidered with the beards of fifteen of them. He demanded these beards as a sign that they acknowledged him as lord."

"There is at least one king who does not acknowledge him as lord," shouted Arthur, as he strode hastily forward.

When he reached the top he saw the giant asleep in front of the two great fires before the cave. He was taller than the tallest pine that ever grew. His arms were as big as the trunk of an oak tree.

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

His mouth was as large as a cave, and from it and his nostrils came forth fire and flame like that from the mountain of Vesuvius. Although his huge eyes were closed, flashes of lightning seemed to shoot from beneath the lids. At his side was an iron club as large as a steeple. About him stood trembling old women fanning him as he slept.

King Arthur approached the monster, and said to him:

"Wretch, awake and fight, for your hour has come."

The giant, starting up, looked down scornfully upon the king and, laughing, threw his great club at Arthur. But the king leapt aside and the club fell harmlessly on the ground, making a hollow where it struck.

Then Arthur rushed toward the giant, waving his good sword Excalibur. The giant caught him in his arms, in order to squeeze him to death. The king's armor pressed closer and closer about him, and he began to lose his strength. But he kept his hand upon his scabbard, and so did not die.

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

In a few minutes the monster, making sure that Arthur was dead, dropped him to the ground. After the king had recovered himself, he sprang to his feet, and taking his sword, threw it at the giant. The good steel pierced his neck, and he sank to the ground, shouting so loudly that Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere at the foot of the mountain heard, and trembled for their master's safety.

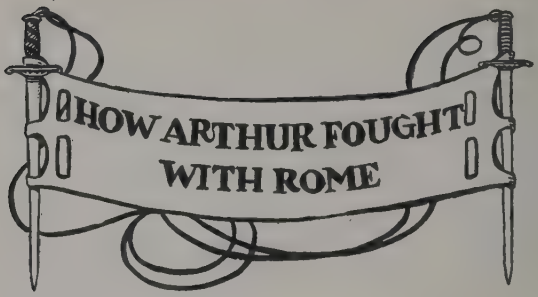
Then the giant again seized Arthur in his arms, and the two began to roll down the mountain side. Whenever Arthur was able to, he struck at the giant with his dagger, wounding him sorely. At last, still struggling and rolling, they came to the spot where Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere were. These two loosed the giant's arms from the king, who then gave one last blow to the monster, killing him. Then he sent Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere for his sword Excalibur.

When the people on the seashore heard what Arthur had done, they fell on their knees and thanked him, offering him all the giant's treasure. He said, however, that he would leave it with them to divide

How Arthur Fought with a Giant

among the poor people of the country. For himself, all he wanted was the giant's iron club.

The people sent fifty men to the top of the mountain to get it for him. As they had no horses, it was a long time before they could drag the club to the seashore. There they put it on a barge. It was so heavy that it pressed the barge down till the water came almost to the edge of the vessel. Then King Arthur bade the people good-by, and took ship with his knights. The grateful men of Brittany stood on the shore, and shouted and waved until the ship could no longer be seen.



IN the time of the great Roman, Julius Cæsar, about five hundred years before King Arthur was born, the people of Rome conquered Britain. They made many improvements in the land, building roads and walls, the remains of which may be seen to this day. But they also forced the Britons to pay them much money. All the kings did this up to the time of Arthur. He, however, considered that England was his own. He had conquered the lesser kings, and made one realm of all the land, over which he ruled with wise government. So he refused to send any money to Rome.

How Arthur Fought with Rome

Once King Arthur's knights were all together in the great hall. It was a time of peace, and they spent the days in riding and hunting. On this day, while the king was sitting on his throne, twelve old men entered, each bearing a branch of olive, as a sign that they came in peace. They were the messengers of the emperor of Rome, and, after bowing to the king, they said:

"Sir, our mighty emperor sends you greeting, and commands you to acknowledge him as lord, and to send him the money due him from your realm. Your father and his predecessors did this, and so must you. If you refuse, the emperor will make such war against you that it will be an example to all the world."

At this the young knights laid their hands to their swords, but the older knights, who had self-control enough to hide their feelings, waited to see what the king would do.

Arthur bowed courteously to the messengers, and told them that he would soon give them an answer. He commanded a knight to take them to a lodging, and to

How Arthur Fought with Rome

see that they had all they needed, and he ordered that no harm should be done them. Then he called a council of his great lords and asked their advice.

Sir Lancelot, Arthur's favorite lord, spoke first, saying:

"My lord, we have rested for many weeks, and can make sharp war now. In days gone by, we should not have dared attack the Romans, and indeed, our attempt will make the world wonder. But of a truth, we ought to fight."

Then spoke King Angus of Scotland:

"My lord Arthur, you are the greatest lord on earth. You have made all of us lesser kings your subjects, and bound the kingdom together, and stopped our civil wars. We love you and we will help you. We pray you to make war on these Romans. When they ruled our elders, they demanded much gold and made our people very poor. If you will fight, I will furnish you with twenty thousand men, and will bear all the cost of them myself."

Then all the other lords promised to furnish men and arms. When Arthur heard this, he was glad of their courage and good

will. He called in the messengers and said to them: *How Arthur Fought with Rome*

"Return to your emperor. Tell him that I refuse his command, for I owe him nothing. I have won this kingdom by my own strength. Tell him that I shall come with all my army to Rome and make him acknowledge me as lord."

Then Arthur told his treasurer to give the messengers gifts, and to take them safely out of the country. Sir Lancelot conducted them to the sea, where they took ship and sailed to France. On they journeyed over the Alps and into Italy. When they told the emperor of Rome their message, he said:

"I had thought Arthur would yield."

But the messengers said:

"Sir, his face would have told you, if you had seen it, that he would never yield. In truth, there is need of fear, for he is a great king and surrounded by great knights."

"This is foolish talk," the emperor said. "Remember that we are Romans. We have ruled the world for centuries, and a little king of little England shall not make

How Arthur Fought with Rome

us fear. You say that he is coming to fight with us. We will take a few troops and go forthwith to France to meet him."

The messengers begged the emperor to take many troops.

"My lord emperor," they said, "these men of Arthur are very numerous and very brave."

So at last the emperor brought all his men to France, and there, whenever he found people who were loyal to Arthur, he killed and laid waste.

Meanwhile, Arthur had gathered together all his troops. He bade farewell to Queen Guinevere, who was so grieved that she fell in a swoon. Then he rode off at the head of his men till they came to the sea, and there they embarked in ten thousand boats and sailed to France.

They marched till they came near to the troops of the emperor of Rome, where they rested for the night. In the morning they rose at dawn and looked at the Roman legions. These were encamped in a green field which glittered with the gold on their tents and armor. The emperor's tent was of purple silk and bore

on the top a golden eagle, the emblem of Rome.

How Arthur Fought with Rome

Two of Arthur's knights, Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, rode out to the emperor, and told him that their king had come.

"That I see," said the emperor laughing, "and he shall soon return."

The two knights made no answer, but rode back to Arthur. Soon all the soldiers on each side made ready for fighting. The preparation was careful, for they knew that the contest was to be a great one. The emperor of Rome addressed his soldiers:

"Romans, remember that Rome is the chief city of the world. I do not say fight as men; I say to you, fight as Romans. Then you will surely conquer these Britains."

King Arthur galloped up and down before the front rank of his men, looking at them carefully. He was on a beautiful white horse whose mane rose and fell in the wind like a wave of the sea. His soldiers cheered lustily for their beloved commander. Then King Arthur

How Arthur Fought with Rome

raised his hand for silence, and spoke in a loud, clear voice:

"My knights and men whom I love, remember that you are fighting to-day for your rights and for the independence of Britain. Strike well, and do not forget that great courage is as powerful as great numbers."

With that, he gave the signal for attack. The Romans stood in full battle array with their emperor in front. Beside him were sixteen kings with gold helmets and silver armor. The English approached, shouting a battle-cry.

Then the Romans, at the call of the trumpet, rushed forward, and in a moment the two great armies clashed together. Clouds of dust arose through which could be seen at intervals the heads of horses and the helmets of men. The few poor shepherds and women who stood on the outside did not know that the greatest battle of the time was going on under that cloud of dust.

Inside the cloud there was great confusion. Britains and Romans were fighting side by side, so closely packed that

"King Arthur raising his hand for silence"

How Arthur Fought with Rome

sometimes it was hard to strike. All fought bravely, but no one did so well as Arthur and Sir Lancelot. The battle did not cease until it was dark. Each side had lost many men. King Arthur wept as he rode over the field and counted his dead knights, and even his beautiful horse drooped its head as if it, also, understood.

But the next day the two armies began to fight again, and when the emperor finally saw that his men were losing and that most of the kings who were helping him were dead, he said:

"This Arthur is a demon and not a man. I will fight with him myself and end this battle." And before any one could stop him, he spurred up to King Arthur and said:

"You on the white horse who refuse to pay me tribute, come out that I may kill you."

Then Arthur rode quickly towards the emperor. The two men began to fight, and Arthur soon saw that he was contending with a powerful man. He gave the emperor many a stroke with Excalibur,

but he himself received deep blows. At last the emperor pierced Arthur's helmet, and wounded him deeply in the cheek. *How Arthur Fought with Rome*

King Arthur raised his good Excalibur with a last effort and struck his enemy with it so fiercely on the head that the blow cleft the helmet and pierced to the emperor's chin. He fell from his horse without a moan. When the Romans near by saw that their ruler was dead, they gave a great cry of grief and rushed upon Arthur, but his good knights protected him.

At last, seeing themselves conquered, the Romans surrendered. Arthur found among his prisoners three senators, and among the dead, sixty senators, the sixteen kings, and the emperor.

He was sorrowful, for he knew that they were great men. So he had them embalmed and laid in chests of lead. Around each chest flags were wound, and the shields of the dead warriors placed on top. Then he said to the three surviving senators:

"Take these noble dead bodies back to Rome. When the Romans see them

How Arthur Fought with Rome

they will never again dare ask tax or tribute of me. I will not go to Rome and take the city from you, but if ever you send to me for gold, I shall invade your land and never rest till all Italy is mine."

The senators bowed their heads. Then they laid the body of the emperor on a car, all alone, with the gold eagle above him. They laid the bodies of the kings and the senators two by two on chariots, and so went slowly towards Rome. And never again did the kings of Britain have to pay a tax to the Romans.

THE KNIGHT WITH *the* BADLY MADE COAT

ONE day when Arthur and his knights were in the hall of the Round Table, a young man entered. He was so large that his shoulders were as wide as the doorway, and he could hardly squeeze through. The knights looked at him in amazement, for he was almost a giant.

When he came closer to them, they saw that he had on a coat which was far too large for him. It hung in wrinkles and folds all over his back, and the sleeves were so long that he had to turn them up almost to the elbow. The coat was of rich material, gold cloth, but it was old and blood-stained.

The young man strode up to the king and said:

"My lord, my name is Brune. I can

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat

tell you no more than that. I beg you to make me a knight."

At this Sir Kay laughed and said:

"He must be called The Knight with the Badly Made Coat."

"Call me what you will," said the young man. "Yes, I take that name, for I will not tell my real one."

Then Arthur spoke to him gently:

"Young man, you ask a great thing. All those in my Court who are made knights must serve for a long time as squires. If they prove themselves loyal and brave, I make them knights. But I must always know whence they come, and who their fathers are."

"My lord," said the young man, "I do indeed ask a great thing. I would gladly tell you more of myself, but I am under a vow to reveal no more than you already know. Yet I will tell you this, further. I am the son of a noble who was as big as a giant. My good father was very peaceable and did not care to fight; so he never came to your Court, and you did not hear of him. He lived at home with my mother and me, and the simple

people who plowed the land about our castle.

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat

"Every one ought to have loved him; but he had one enemy. One day, six years ago, when I was only a boy, my father and I were in the forest. My father was sleeping at the foot of a tree, and I was bathing in a brook near by. This enemy, who wanted my father's lands, came up and drove his sword into my father's heart. Then he rode away. I ran up to my dead father and took off the coat which he wore and put it on. I swore never to take it off, and never to tell my father's name or where I came from, till I had avenged his death.

"Then I rode home to our castle, but our enemy had taken possession of it, and had made my mother prisoner. As I was not yet grown up I vowed that I would stay with the good shepherds near by till I was strong enough to pull up a young tree by the roots. Then I would go to King Arthur's Court and ask to be made a knight. So every month I have tried to uproot a young tree. This morning I succeeded, and here, my lords, I am."

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat

The knights were much moved and prayed the king to make him a knight. They said that they would teach him to use arms. The king said that he would wait to see what sort of man Brune was.

A few days after this all the knights rode off to a tournament and Brune was left at home with a few soldiers. He was in the castle yard practicing some of the lessons in warfare which the knights had been teaching him. While he was hard at work, Queen Guinevere with twelve soldiers who were her bodyguard passed by.

As she was speaking kindly to Brune, they heard a terrible noise, and looking in the direction from which it came, saw a dreadful sight. A fierce lion which had been confined in a tower of stone had broken out of its prison and was rushing towards them. The twelve soldiers fled, leaving the queen and Brune alone.

"Ah," said Brune, "not all the cowards in the world are dead."

He stood still while the lion bounded towards him. He had dropped his sword, and as the beast leaped upon him, he

"The king touched him lightly with his sword"

The Knight with the Badly Made Coat

seized its head in his hands. Then he slowly, slowly, bent its head back. It was a strong lion, and with the effort the muscles on Brune's neck stood out like great ropes. Presently, the queen and Brune heard a loud crack and they knew that the lion's neck was broken. Brune loosed his hold, and the huge tawny body dropped to the ground, quivered a moment, and was still.

While this was going on, the king and his knights returned. They saw at a glance what Brune had done, and cheered him loudly. The king rode up to him.

"Kneel down," he said.

Brune knelt down by the body of the lion, and the king touched him lightly with his sword, saying:

"Sir Brune, I make you a knight of my Round Table. Be always loyal, brave, and merciful."

Then all the knights were glad, but Sir Brune was gladdest of all.

SIR LANCELOT & SIR BRUNE

AFTER Sir Brune, the Knight with the Badly Made Coat, had been at Arthur's Court for some months, he became eager to seek for the enemy of his father. Sir Lancelot, who took an interest in the big young knight, advised him to wait and try his strength at some smaller adventure first.

One day, when Sir Lancelot was away hunting, a damsel entered Arthur's hall. She carried a black shield which had painted on it a white hand holding a sword. She bowed to the king and said:

"My lord, I come for a knight to undertake the adventure of the black shield."

"And what is that adventure, fair damsel?" asked the king.

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

"That I may not tell you," answered the damsel, "except that it will cause much fighting and bloodshed to the knight who chooses it."

Some of the knights were eager to go, and Sir Kay pressed forward to finger the shield.

"Do not touch it, good Sir Kay," said the maiden, "for this adventure is not for you. I am to choose the knight."

She passed up and down the hall, looking into the face of each one. When she had seen them all she came back to Sir Brune and said:

"Young Knight with the Ugly Coat, will you take this shield?"

"Gladly, if my king allows," said the knight.

Then Arthur gave his permission, and Sir Brune followed the damsel out of the hall. Her horse was black, and wore white trappings. Sir Brune's horse was as brown as an autumn leaf. The two mounted and rode away. Sir Brune began to talk to the damsel, whose name was Elinor. At first she was agreeable, but after they had ridden many miles

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"Sir Brune followed the damsel out of the hall"

she became scornful, and told him she was sorry she had chosen him. *Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune*

Sir Brune felt sad, because he had begun to love the damsel. He was afraid she did not like him because his coat was poor. He did not speak to her any more, but rode on sorrowfully beside her. After a long time they came to a castle enclosed by high walls. The gate stood open, and the damsel Elinor pointed to it and said, sighing:

"Since you have not left me as I hoped you would, go in there. You will find your first adventure. I may not tell you what it is."

Sir Brune galloped inside the gate. There he saw a hundred knights on horseback, armed and waiting for him. He had to think and act quickly. So he decided to rush in between the knights and put his back against the castle wall. Then he could fight with his back protected. He did this, though not without receiving some spear-wounds. Then he began to fight.

The lady of the castle, whom the knights were keeping prisoner, watched

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

the fight out of the window, and grieved for the brave young man who had so many against him. She began to speak to him in a low voice:

"Young knight, if you can only get to the left side of the castle wall, there is a secret door through which you can escape. If you look, you will see that one portion of the wall is made of black stones. Strike the stones with the hilt of your sword, and a door will open through which you can ride out."

The other knights did not hear what the lady said, for they were farther away from her than Sir Brune was. Even he could hardly catch her words. He took a quick glance to the left and saw that there was indeed a portion of the wall marked with black stones. Then he began to work his way carefully towards the secret gate.

He was obliged to move slowly for fear the knights would guess what he was doing. Moreover, it was becoming very hard to fight, because of his many wounds. However, he at last came near the door; then he backed his brown horse up

against it, struck the black stones with the handle of his sword, and the door opened. The knights shouted with rage, but they were unable to reach him in time. Sir Brune escaped, leaving behind him twelve men dead. *Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune*

He was very weak, and he made his way painfully to the side of the wall where the maiden Elinor waited for him. She ran to meet him, and led him gently to a brook in a forest near by. There she took off his armor and bathed his wounds, anointing them with a precious salve she carried.

Sir Brune thought that she was sorry because she had been scornful of him, and he began to talk to her. But she said :

"Do not talk to me. If you want to please me, go back to Arthur's Court."

Sir Brune did not know why she spoke so, but he was too tired to think. So he lay down on the grass by the brook and went to sleep.

Meantime, at Arthur's Court Sir Lancelot had returned from his hunting expedition, and was told how Sir Brune

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

had gone out with a damsel on the adventure of the shield.

"Oh!" cried Sir Lancelot, "what have you done! He will surely be killed. Merlin has told me what this adventure of the shield is. Many and many a knight has taken it up and each has been killed. A knight who vows to follow this adventure has to meet dangers of all sorts. This young untried Sir Brune will certainly be killed."

He called for his horse and arms, and said to the king:

"My lord, I will ride after this poor young man and give him what help I can. Perhaps I shall be too late; but if not, I shall ask him to give me this adventure of the shield."

Then Sir Lancelot mounted his horse and rode after Sir Brune. When he came near the brook where Sir Brune and the damsel had rested, he heard the sound of a great combat. Spurring forward he saw Sir Brune, fighting single-handed against six knights. Sir Lancelot rushed to the rescue and quickly overthrew the enemy. He found that they

belonged to the company of the hundred knights whom Sir Brune had attacked. He ordered them, first of all, to free the lady of the castle, and then to go to Arthur's Court and surrender themselves to the mercy of the king. *Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune*

Poor Sir Brune was almost dead, but Sir Lancelot revived him, and in a feeble voice he thanked Sir Lancelot for his help. But the damsel begged:

"Take him back to the Court of your king. I do not want him to follow this quest any longer."

"This is surely ungrateful of you," said Sir Lancelot. "He has fought bravely and well."

"The maiden scorns me, though I love her," bitterly said Sir Brune.

Then the damsel Elinor cried out:

"I will tell the truth. I love you and I am afraid you will be killed. Therefore, I wish you to return to Camelot."

Sir Brune was very glad, and he said:

"I have pledged my word and must follow this quest. When I have succeeded we shall go together back to Arthur's Court."

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

"Give this adventure to me," said Sir Lancelot, "and go back now with the damsel."

But Sir Brune refused. Then Sir Lancelot said that they must undertake the adventure together, and Sir Brune consenting, they rode slowly forward. Soon they came to an abbey, where they rested for some days until Sir Brune was well.

Then they traveled as the damsel gave directions. She always knew what they had to do. At times they passed through woods full of wild beasts, some of which attacked them. Again they passed over enchanted meadows where wicked magicians tried to cast spells over them. They also fought with many knights. However, they escaped all dangers, although it is certain that Sir Brune would never have succeeded without the help of Sir Lancelot.

At length the damsel Elinor told them that they were nearing the last adventure. She pointed to a castle on a hill; a square structure built of black stones, with a turret on top. The damsel told

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

them that at the gate of the castle were two huge dragons. These they must slay.

"Whose is the castle?" asked Sir Brune.

"It belongs now to the wicked Lord Brian of the Isles," answered the damsel.

At this Sir Brune gave such a loud shout that the dragons on top of the hill heard him and roared in reply.

"Ah!" cried he, "that is the name of my enemy, who killed my dear father. At last I shall slay him."

He rode off so quickly that Sir Lancelot had much trouble to keep up with him. It seemed scarcely five minutes before they came to the dragons; terrible creatures, all of green, with eyes and tongues of flame. And their wings were as large as the sails of a ship.

Sir Brune had never before seen a dragon, but he was not afraid. He fought very bravely, and even when the teeth of the dragons crunched on his helmet, he did not lose courage. After a fierce fight of half an hour, the two knights had killed the dragons.

They hoped to rest, but at that moment

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

the castle gate opened and a porter appeared.

"Enter and fight," he said.

Both spurred forward, but the porter said:

"One only may enter."

"Let me go," said Sir Brune to Sir Lancelot. "Remember I am to avenge my father's death. It may be that Lord Brian of the Isles is waiting just inside the gate."

Sir Lancelot consented, and the porter led in Sir Brune and locked the gate. Inside were two great knights, the brothers of Lord Brian of the Isles. They were almost as large as Sir Brune. Together they set upon him. He was already tired from his fight with the dragons, but his desire to avenge his father strengthened his arm. One brother was soon overthrown. When the other saw that, he yielded. Then Sir Brune sent them both to Sir Lancelot outside the gate.

While Sir Brune was looking about him, a third knight appeared at the end of the courtyard. He was quite as large as Sir Brune, and as he came spurring up, the

noise of his horse's hoofs was deafening. Sir Brune recognized him as Sir Plenorius, the cousin of Lord Brian. *Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune*

"Ah!" cried he, "where is that wretch, Lord Brian? Am I to fight with all his family before I meet with him?"

Sir Plenorius wasted no words. He rushed upon Sir Brune and struck him with his long spear. The blow broke Sir Brune's helmet, and he had much trouble to guard his head with his shield. He fought courageously, but he became weaker and weaker. Then Sir Plenorius stopped fighting.

"I know you will never yield," he said. "You are the bravest knight I have yet seen. In truth, I loved your good father, and grieved because my cousin slew him. I have no love for my cousin, Lord Brian of the Isles, but I am vowed to fight for him as long as he lives, or until I am overcome."

Sir Brune was about to answer, but he fell back in a swoon. Sir Plenorius lifted him gently in his arms and bore him into the castle. He carried him up the winding stairs to the turret room, and gently

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

laid him on a bed. Then he went back to the courtyard.

Meantime, Sir Lancelot, hearing the porter shout that Sir Brune was killed, beat on the gate, but nobody would let him in. Then with great difficulty he climbed the castle wall and leaped down. Sir Plenorius was just about to care for the horse of Sir Brune.

"Give me back my friend!" cried Sir Lancelot, fiercely. "Where is my friend?"

Then he began to fight with Sir Plenorius. Sir Plenorius was so much larger than Sir Lancelot that he thought he could easily overcome him. As the fight went on, however, he found himself all but defeated.

"Yield now to me," said Sir Lancelot. "I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then Sir Plenorius said:

"Ah, my good lord, I know of your fame. If we go on fighting, you will certainly kill me. Yet I do not want to yield, so I ask you to treat me as I have treated Sir Brune."

When Sir Lancelot heard how Sir Plenorius had spared Sir Brune, he said:

"You are a gentle knight. I am sorry you are vowed to the service of Lord Brian of the Isles. He shall surely die." *Sir Lanceloi and Sir Brune*

Sir Plenorius answered:

"When he is dead, I will come to Arthur's Court as one of his followers."

All this time Sir Brune was lying in a swoon on the bed in the turret room. But at last he came to himself and looked about him. He saw near him his sword and shield; so he lifted them up beside him. As he lay still, trying to recover his strength, he heard stealthy footsteps coming up the turret stairs. They came nearer and nearer. Suddenly, in rushed Lord Brian of the Isles. He knew that Sir Brune was there, alone and wounded, and he intended to kill him as he lay defenseless. Sir Brune understood this and he cried:

"Ah, wretch, you were ever a coward. You come to kill me as I lie wounded here, just as you killed my poor father while he slept. But the sight of you makes me forget my wounds."

At these words, and at the fierce rage

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

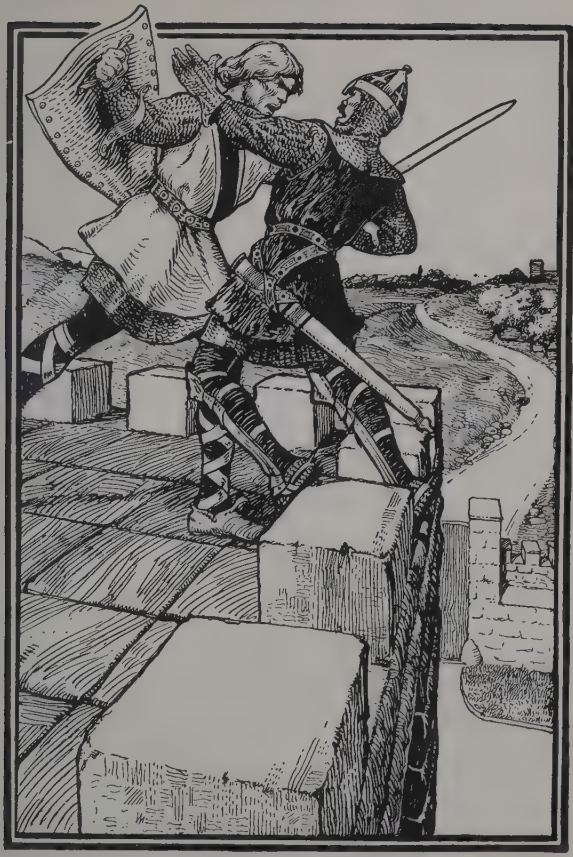
which shone in Sir Brune's eyes, Lord Brian, who was indeed a coward, tried to retreat. But Sir Brune sprang to the doorway.

"You shall never go down by these stairs, villain," he said, "for I will kill you!"

Lord Brian rushed to the window and sprang out upon the battlements. Sir Brune followed him, though with difficulty. The two began to fight, and Sir Brune soon saw that his enemy was trying to push him close to the edge of the battlements, that he might fall down into the courtyard below.

Sir Brune, at this, put himself behind Lord Brian, determined to cast him off instead. Slowly he pushed him, until Lord Brian was but a step from the edge. Then Sir Brune lifted his shield and struck his enemy with it. The wicked lord lost his footing, and was dashed to pieces at the feet of Sir Lancelot and Sir Plenorius in the courtyard below.

They ordered his soldiers to bury him, and while Sir Lancelot went to care for Sir Brune, Sir Plenorius went down the



"He pushed him until he was but a step from the edge"

Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune

hill to find the damsel Elinor. She came back with tears of joy to Sir Brune.

When Sir Brune was well enough to travel, he visited all the castles of Lord Brian, in search of his lost mother. He was very much afraid that she was dead, but at last he found her alive, in the very castle which had belonged to his father. There was great joy at their meeting. He took her to Arthur's Court, whither Sir Lancelot had already conducted the damsel Elinor. A few days afterward Sir Brune and the damsel were married amid great festivities.

THE ADVENTURE OF KING PELLENORE

IN Arthur's Court, every knight or lady who was found unworthy was banished; yet it often took some time to discover one's real character.

One of the ladies of Arthur's Court was named Vivien. She was very pretty, and as graceful as a willow wand, and so bright and attractive in her ways that no one suspected her of being very wicked.

Among Arthur's bravest warriors was King Pellenore. He had once had a great fight with Arthur, but after that they had become friends, and King Pellenore had been made a Knight of the Round Table. He was not often at court, for he spent much of his time seeking for adventures.

The Adventure of King Pellenore

Now and then he would return and put away his armor. Then he rode with the ladies or talked to the other knights.

The lady Vivien admired King Pellenore for his valor and his mighty deeds, and whenever she could she talked with him about his adventures. One afternoon she begged him to go for a long ride with her through the forest. So their horses were brought and they set forth. Just as they were passing a thick part of the wood, a beautiful golden-haired lady stepped out.

"Good sir knight," she cried to King Pellenore, "I ask your help. I am here in the wood with the dear lord who is to be my husband. He is sore wounded, for an enemy crept up behind him as we were riding to Arthur's Court, and thrust a sword in his back."

Then King Pellenore turned his horse's head toward the maiden.

"Gladly will I help," he said; "lead me, maiden."

But Vivien called him back.

"Do not go with her," she said. "She may be a witch. Ride on with me."

"She is no witch, but a good maiden," said King Pellenore. *The Adventure of King Pellenore*

Then the golden-haired lady spoke again. "Oh, sir knight, help me! I must go to Arthur's Court to see my father. My dear lover is going to ask permission to marry me. Help us or he will die."

"Assuredly I will help you, damsel," said King Pellenore.

Vivien held his arm, but he put her gently aside. When the wicked woman saw that he was going to leave her, she made her horse plunge and throw her to the ground. There she lay as if in a faint.

King Pellenore did not know what to do. He felt as if he must help the beautiful lady, and yet he could not leave Vivien. So he said:

"Fair damsel, you shall have my help. I have never wanted to aid anyone so much as I do you. I must save your lover and bring you both to Arthur's Court. But let me first ride back with this lady who has swooned. Then I will return here to you."

"Alas, alas, I fear it will be too late,"

The Adventure of King Pellenore

cried the damsel, turning back into the forest.

Then King Pellenore lifted Vivien on her horse, and tied her to its back by her long green scarf. At this she opened her eyes and groaned, and said that she was very sick. She made him ride very slowly to the court.

King Pellenore did not talk to her. He was thinking all the time of the golden-haired maiden. As soon as he reached the city gate he gave Vivien over into the care of a knight who was passing, and galloped back to the woods.

When he reached the spot where the beautiful damsel had spoken to him, he turned into the thick part of the wood and followed a narrow path. It was so narrow that the branches of the trees on both sides struck his shoulders, but still he hurried on. The path ended in a glade, and there he saw the lady and her lover lying on the grass.

"Alas, alas!" the lady said, "my dear lord is dead and I am dying."

Then King Pellenore saw that the fair young knight who lay on the ground

was very pale and quiet, and that all the grass about was blood-stained.

'Ah, good knight," said the lady, "after you left me, a lion ran out of the wood and slew my lover with one stroke of his paw. He has wounded me so sorely that I too shall die."

Then King Pellenore wept.

"I wish that I had made Vivien wait here," he said, "and had helped you. I fear I have done wrong."

He sat down and took her golden head on his knee, and spoke to her gently till she died. Then he put her body and her lover's body on his horse, and walked beside them sorrowfully until he reached Arthur's Court.

Near the great hall he met Arthur and Merlin and several knights.

"I am a miserable man," he said.

Then the wise Merlin said: "You are more miserable than you know. This beautiful lady was your own daughter who was stolen from you as a child. Only lately she learned who her father was. She was coming here to seek you."

Then King Pellenore wept loudly.

The Adventure of King Pellenore

"This is my punishment," he cried, "for not aiding the maiden. The one who needs help most should be given it first, and she needed it more than Vivien. I am indeed punished."

"And you shall be punished yet more," said Merlin; "and in good time, Vivien also for the part she took. Some day the friend whom you most trust shall deceive you, and you shall be betrayed to death."

King Pellenore bowed his head meekly.

"I have deserved it," he said. "And now I must bury my dear child and her lover."

The beautiful golden-haired lady and her lover were buried with great mourning, and it was many a day before King Pellenore cared to seek for adventures.

SIR LANCELOT was acknowledged by all the knights of the Round Table to be the bravest of their number, and the one whom the king loved most. He was not often at court, because he was nearly always engaged in adventures which took him away from the town of Camelot. The knights were always sorry when he went away, yet they were sure he would return safely and with much to tell them.

One day Sir Lancelot called his nephew Sir Lionel, and told him to mount his horse, for they must go to seek adventures. Sir Lionel was very glad, for it was a great honor to be chosen as a

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

companion by Sir Lancelot. They rode off through a deep forest, and then across a wide, treeless plain. The sun was shining hot and bright, and when they reached a clump of trees, Sir Lancelot bade Sir Lionel dismount. Then the two sat in the shade to rest.

It was not long before Sir Lancelot fell asleep. While Sir Lionel kept guard, he saw three knights furiously pursued by another knight, who was very large. This knight overtook the three knights, one after another, and overthrew them, and bound them by the reins of their bridles. Sir Lionel, who was young and self-confident, thought that he would like to fight with this knight. So he mounted his horse very quietly without waking his uncle, and rode into the plain.

When the big knight saw him coming, he laughed and rode up quickly. At the very first stroke, young Sir Lionel fell to the earth. The strong knight bound him fast to the other three knights and drove them all to his castle. There he took off their armor and clothes, and beat them with thorny sticks. After that he threw

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"At the very first stroke, Sir Lionel fell"

them into a deep dungeon where there were many other knights.

Meanwhile Sir Hector, the foster father of King Arthur, hearing that Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel had gone in search of adventures, determined to join them; so he rode hastily in pursuit. When he had gone some distance through the forest, he met a wood-cutter, and asked him if he had seen Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel. The man replied that he had not.

"Then do you know of any adventure which I can seek?" asked Sir Hector.

The man answered:

"Sir, a mile from here is a strong castle. On one side of it is a large stream, and by that stream a large tree. At the foot of the tree is a basin of copper. Go and strike on that three times with your spear and you will meet with an adventure."

"Thank you heartily," said Sir Hector.

He rode on and soon came to the tree. Hanging on it were a great many shields, and among them Sir Lionel's. There were also shields which belonged to other knights of the Round Table. Sir Hector

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

knew that the knights must be prisoners, and he grew very angry.

He struck sharply on the copper basin, and at once a huge knight appeared.

"Come forward and fight!" cried the knight.

"That I will," said Sir Hector.

"But I shall win," said the knight, "for I am the great Sir Turquaine."

Sir Hector had heard of this powerful knight whom so many of Arthur's lords had tried in vain to overthrow. But he was a brave old man, and so he began to fight fearlessly. He wounded the big knight once, but the knight wounded him many times, and at last overcame him. He picked Sir Hector up and carried him under his right arm into the castle.

"You are very brave," he said, when they had reached the great hall. "You are the first knight who has wounded me these twelve years. Now I shall give you your freedom if you will swear to be a follower of mine."

"I shall never swear that," said Sir Hector; "I am a follower of King Arthur."

"I am sorry for that," said Sir Tur-

quaine, "for now I must treat you as I do all my other prisoners."

Then he took off Sir Hector's armor and clothes, and beat him with the thorny stick, and threw him into the dungeon. There the old man found Sir Lionel and many other knights.

"Is Sir Lancelot here?" asked Sir Hector, feebly.

"No," said Sir Lionel, and told how he had left Sir Lancelot sleeping.

Then Sir Hector became cheerful.

"Sir Lancelot will surely find us," he said, "and give us our freedom."

But Sir Lancelot still slept on under the tree. Soon four beautiful ladies rode by, and, seeing a sleeping knight, dismounted to look at him. They at once recognized him as Sir Lancelot, the bravest knight in the land. One of these ladies was Morgan le Fay, whom Arthur had forgiven for her treachery to him. She said to her companions:

"I will cast a spell over him, and we will carry him to my castle. Then, when he wakes, we will make him choose one of us as his wife."

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

The other three agreed, and Morgan le Fay cast her spell. Then the four women lifted the knight upon his horse and went with him to the castle of Morgan le Fay. They put the knight in a richly decorated chamber and left him.

In the morning he awoke and wondered where he was. Soon a fair damsel entered with food, and he asked her to explain how he came to be in that place.

"Sir, I cannot," she said. "But I can tell you this much: you are under a spell. In twelve hours the spell will break, and perhaps I can help you then."

After the damsel had gone out, the four ladies entered. They were clad in most beautiful robes. One had on silk that looked like the foam of the sea. Another had on velvet that seemed like moss from the forest. The third wore satin that was the color of maple leaves in autumn. Morgan le Fay wore a robe that looked like a storm-cloud, and her diamonds were like stars.

"Choose one of us for your wife," she said, "and you shall be very happy."

But Sir Lancelot said:

"Fair ladies, I have no wish to marry. I would rather fight for my good King Arthur who needs me."

At this the ladies were angry.

"You shall stay here till you choose, they said. "And if you will not choose, then you shall die in prison."

They went out, and Sir Lancelot remained alone all day. At dusk the fair damsel came to him.

"My lord," she said, "the spell is broken now, and I can help you. These ladies are not kind to me, and I am going to run away. I will take you with me on one condition."

"Name it, damsel," he said.

"I am a king's daughter," she said. "My father is King Bagdemagus."

"He is a good man," Sir Lancelot said. "I know him well."

"My father has been fighting in a tournament," said the maiden, "and has been overcome, with all his knights. He feels very sad. Now, in two days there will be another tournament at which he must fight. If you help him, he will surely win and be happy again.'

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

"I will gladly help him," said Sir Lancelot.

Then the damsel bade him walk softly with her. She opened twelve great doors one after another. Each had a lock with a key so heavy that the maiden had to use both hands to turn it. At last they reached the courtyard, and there she gave Sir Lancelot his horse and armor. She also mounted a horse, and the two rode away.

After riding all night, they came to the court of King Bagdemagus. He was overjoyed to welcome Sir Lancelot, for well he knew that none could overcome that good knight in combat. All day there was music and dancing and feasting. Sir Lancelot, however, could not be merry. He kept thinking of his nephew, Sir Lionel, and wondering where he was.

On the morning of the tournament Sir Lancelot asked King Bagdemagus to furnish him with a white shield, because he did not want to be known. The king did so, and also gave each of the three knights who rode with him a shield of the same color. Sir Lancelot went

with the knights into a little leafy wood near the field where the tournament was to be held. *Sir Lancelot and His Friends*

Meanwhile King Bagdemagus rode to the tournament with sixty men, and met there the king of Northgalis with eighty men. They began to fight, and soon those on the side of King Bagdemagus began to be worsted. Then Sir Lancelot, with the three knights, dashed out of the little wood and into the thick of the fight.

No one could stand against Sir Lancelot. One of King Arthur's knights, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, was fighting against King Bagdemagus. Not knowing who Sir Lancelot was, he rushed upon him. Sir Lancelot unhorsed him, but would not hurt him, because he was a Knight of the Round Table. Years afterward he was sorry he had not killed him, for Sir Modred proved to be a traitor to King Arthur.

Sir Lancelot fought so well that, for his sake, all the prizes of the tournament were given to King Bagdemagus, who was greatly rejoiced, and offered large

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

gifts to Sir Lancelot, and begged him to be his guest for a time. But Sir Lancelot was so anxious to find out what had become of Sir Lionel that he could not remain. So the next day he set forth.

He rode back towards the clump of trees where he had fallen asleep while Sir Lionel kept watch. On the highway he met a damsel riding on a white palfrey.

"Fair damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "can you tell me of any adventures hereabouts? I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

"Oh, Sir Lancelot," said she, "it is indeed fortunate that you have come, for there is here a knight named Sir Turquaine who has put in prison many of the knights of the Round Table. You shall fight with him for the freedom of your friends."

Then she turned her horse, and Sir Lancelot gladly followed her. She brought him to the tree on which hung the shields of his brother knights. Sir Lancelot let his horse drink a little water, and then he struck on the iron basin at the foot of the tree so fiercely that the bottom fell out.

No one appeared, however. Then he

"He struck so fiercely the bottom fell out"

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

rode up to the castle of Sir Turquaine. Near the gate he met the big knight. He was on foot, driving his horse before him. On the horse lay a knight, securely bound. Sir Lancelot recognized him as Sir Gaheris, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth.

"Put down the knight," said Sir Lancelot. "Mount and fight."

"Gladly," said Sir Turquaine. "Before long you will be sorry for your challenge."

Then the two rode at each other. Their horses' feet beat the dust into clouds, and they used their swords so fiercely that their armor rang continually like the clanging of heavy bells. They fought until they were breathless, each bleeding from many wounds. Then Sir Turquaine, leaning on his sword, said:

"By my faith, never have I fought with such a strong man before. I admire you, and I would be your friend. You fight as they say that knight does whom I hate most in all this world. If you are not that knight, I give you my friendship, and shall free all my prisoners for your sake."

"That is well said," replied Sir Lancelot. "Tell me who this knight is whom you hate so much."

"He is Sir Lancelot of the Lake. For hatred of him, I kill or imprison all the knights of the Round Table whom I can find."

"Then let us begin to fight again," said Sir Lancelot, "for I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then they struck at each other furiously, and soon gave each other so many wounds that the ground was covered with blood. Sir Turquaine was a brave man, but he was not so strong as Sir Lancelot. After a long conflict he fell, mortally wounded, to the ground. Then Sir Lancelot unlaced his helmet and eased him as well as he could till he died. Afterwards he left Sir Turquaine, and went to the porter who held the keys of the castle.

Sir Lancelot took the keys and unlocked the doors of the prison. He led the poor knights out into the daylight and struck off their chains. Sir Lionel and Sir Hector were overjoyed to see that their deliverer was indeed Sir Lancelot.

Sir Lancelot and His Friends

Each knight found his own armor in the armory, and his own horse in the stables. After that a servant came with four horses laden down with venison, and the poor knights, who for a long time had had nothing but bread and water, enjoyed a good meal. Then Sir Lancelot rode away in search of new adventures.

HOW SIR LANCELOT SAVED THE QUEEN

ONE day in May Queen Guinevere invited ten ladies and ten knights to ride a-Maying with her the next morning in the woods. So at the appointed time they assembled, all dressed in green silk and green velvet, the color of young grass. The knights wore white plumes in their helmets, and the ladies wore white May-blossoms in their hair. They rode off very happily, telling the king that they would return before noon.

Now the good King Bagdemagus, for whom Sir Lancelot had fought, had a bad son named Sir Malgrace. For a long time he had wanted to capture the queen and carry her off to his castle. He had been afraid to try, however, because of her large bodyguard. All the young knights of the Round Table liked to ride with

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

her and protect her. They took good care of all the ladies of the Court, but they loved the queen most.

When Sir Malgrace heard that the queen was out a-Maying with only a few knights, and these not fully armed, he determined to take her prisoner. So he called together eighty men-at-arms and a hundred archers, and set out. Soon he came upon her and her attendants. They were sitting on a little hill, with wreaths of flowers and leaves on their arms and necks. Before they could rise to their feet, Sir Malgrace and his men dashed upon them.

"Traitor!" cried the queen. "What would you do?"

"I will carry you to my castle, fair queen," he said. "And never again shall you go free."

"I will not go with you," said the queen.

Then the ten knights drew their swords and set on the hundred and eighty men of Sir Malgrace. They fought so well that they overthrew forty. Still, they could do little against such num-

bers, and soon all were wounded. When the queen saw this, she cried out:

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

"Sir Malgrace, do not slay my noble knights, and I will go with you. I would rather die than cause them further harm."

The knights said that they would rather perish than be prisoners to Sir Malgrace. However, upon an order from their lord, the archers tied up the wounds of the queen's followers, and put them on horseback. Then the whole company rode slowly towards the castle of Sir Malgrace.

Sir Malgrace kept close to the queen for fear she would escape. Once when they were in a thick part of the wood he rode ahead to break the branches so that they should not strike her face. Then the queen whispered to a little maiden who rode near her:

"If you can do so, slip away from the company. You are so small that perhaps they will not notice you. Take this ring and give it to our greatest knight, Sir Lancelot, and pray him to come and rescue me."

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

The little maid waited until she thought the time for escape had come, and rode off as quietly as she could. Sir Malgrace saw her go, and suspected that the queen had sent her. He ordered his archers to shoot at the child, but she escaped unhurt.

"Madam," said Sir Malgrace to the queen, "I know well that you have sent for Sir Lancelot, but you may be sure that hither he shall never come."

Then Sir Malgrace ordered his archers to stand guard on the road and shoot down any knight they saw.

"But if he should be Sir Lancelot," he said, "be sure that you do not venture very close to him, for he is hard to overcome."

Meantime the little maid reached Arthur's Court in safety. She found the king and his knights very anxious because the queen had not returned. She told her story, and gave the queen's ring to Sir Lancelot.

"Bring me my armor!" shouted Sir Lancelot. "I will rescue my good and dear queen before the night falls. I would

rather see her safe here again than own all France."

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

He put on his armor and mounted his white horse and rode off without delay. The little maid led him to the place where the ten knights had fought with the hundred and eighty. From this point he traced them by the blood on the grass and on the road. At last he reached the archers.

"Turn back," they said. "No one may pass here."

"That I will not," said Sir Lancelot. "I am a Knight of the Round Table, and therefore have the right of way throughout the land."

At that they shot their arrows at him. He was wounded with many of them, and his white horse was killed. Sir Lancelot tried to reach the men, but there were so many hedges and ditches in the way that he could not. They hastened back to tell Sir Malgrace that a knight whom they had not succeeded in killing was coming to the castle.

Sir Lancelot tried to walk, but his armor was too heavy for him to carry in

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

his wounded state. He dared not leave any of it behind, for he would need it all in fighting. Just as he was wondering what he could do, a carter passed him, driving a rough wagon.

"Carter," said Sir Lancelot, "let me ride in your wagon to the castle of Sir Malgrace."

The carter was amazed, for in that day a knight never entered into a cart unless he was a condemned man going to be hanged. Sir Lancelot, however, did not stop to explain. He jumped into the cart and told the driver to go quickly.

Some of the ladies of Queen Guinevere were looking out of their window, and one said to her:

"See, my queen, there is a poor knight going to be hanged."

The queen looked out of the window and recognized Sir Lancelot by the three lions blazoned upon his shield. She was overjoyed, and waved him a glad greeting as he came up to the castle gate.

Sir Lancelot beat on the gate with his shield, and cried:

"Come out, false traitor, Sir Malgrace;

come out and fight. If you do not, you will be branded as a coward forever."

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

At first Sir Malgrace thought that he would keep his gates shut fast and not answer the challenge. But in those days it was a sign of great cowardice not to accept a challenge. Moreover, since Sir Lancelot had been able to reach the castle in spite of the archers, he was afraid other knights of the Round Table might do the same. Then they would besiege him and force him to surrender. Still he was afraid to fight. So he went to Queen Guinevere and said:

'Fair queen, remember how I saved your ten knights when I could have killed them. Now I am sorry I took you prisoner. I beg that you will go to Sir Lancelot and urge him not to fight. Then I will entertain him in this castle with the best I have, and to-morrow you shall all go back to the court."

Then the queen said:

"Peace is always better than war. I will do the best I can."

So she went down to Sir Lancelot, who still beat upon the gate, and besought him

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

to come in peaceably, for Sir Malgrace was sorry for what he had done. Sir Lancelot was unwilling, for he knew that Sir Malgrace was a traitor, deserving punishment. Still, he could not refuse the queen anything she asked him, and, therefore, he entered the castle.

Sir Malgrace greeted him with politeness, and served to him and to the others of Arthur's Court, a great banquet. After that, to the surprise of everyone, he rose and accused the queen of treason. All the company was astonished. Sir Lancelot was very angry.

"If you say the queen is a traitress," he cried, "you shall fight with me, although you were afraid just now"

"I am not afraid to fight," said Sir Malgrace.

"When and where will you meet me in combat?" asked Sir Lancelot.

"In eight days," replied Sir Malgrace, "in the field near Westminster."

Sir Lancelot agreed to this. Then Queen Guinevere rose with all her attendants and went into the courtyard. Their horses were brought them and they

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

mounted. Sir Lancelot was the last to pass out of the banquet hall. As he was going through the door he stepped upon a trap which Sir Malgrace had prepared for him. The trapdoor fell and dropped him into a dark dungeon.

When the queen and her knights and ladies had ridden out of the courtyard, they noticed that Sir Lancelot was not with them. They supposed, however, that he had ridden off by himself, as was often his custom, so they went without him to Camelot, and told the king what had happened. He was very angry at Sir Malgrace's accusation, but he was sure that Sir Lancelot would punish Sir Malgrace, and so vindicate Queen Guinevere.

Meantime, the unhappy Sir Lancelot lay bruised in the dungeon, feeling very sure that Sir Malgrace meant to starve him to death. He lay hungry and thirsty for nearly two days. Then Sir Malgrace peeped in to see if he were dead.

"Ah, traitor!" cried Sir Lancelot, "I shall overcome you yet."

At that Sir Malgrace shut the trapdoor hastily, as if he were afraid that Sir

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

Lancelot could leap up ten feet in the air. That one look, however, cost the wicked knight dear, for the daughter of the porter saw him shutting the trapdoor, and was curious to know who was in the dungeon. So at night she opened the trapdoor and let herself down by a rope.

When she saw Sir Lancelot she was very sorry for him. He offered her much money if she would free him. At last she said:

"I will do it for love of Queen Guinevere and not for money."

She let him climb up by the rope, and took him out of the courtyard. He was so sick that he went to a hermit's hut and rested for several days. When next Sir Malgrace looked into the dungeon he heard no movement. Then he rejoiced greatly, for he thought Sir Lancelot was dead.

When the eighth day had come, all the knights of the Round Table assembled in the tournament field and waited for Sir Lancelot to appear. They all thought he would surely come. But Sir Malgrace rode jauntily about the field. Many of

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

the knights wondered at his courage, not knowing the reason for his confidence.

The herald blew his trumpet once, but Sir Lancelot did not appear; twice, and still he did not come. Then up started several knights and begged the king to let them fight instead of Sir Lancelot.

"He has been trapped," they said, "or he would be here."

While the king was hesitating whom to choose, in rode Sir Lancelot. He dashed up to Sir Malgrace.

"Here I am, traitor," he said. "Now do your worst."

Then they fought, but at the first stroke Sir Malgrace fell to the earth.

"Mercy!" he cried, "I yield to you, Sir Knight. Do not slay me. I put myself in the king's hands and yours."

Sir Lancelot was much vexed. He wanted to kill Sir Malgrace for his treachery, and yet, since the man had asked for mercy, he could not. So he said:

"What, coward, would you stop already? Shame upon you! Get up and fight."

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

"I shall not rise unless you take me as one who has yielded," answered the knight.

Then Sir Lancelot said:

"Traitor, I make you this offer: I will take off my helmet, unarm my left side, and tie my left hand behind my back. In that way I will fight with you."

Upon hearing this, Sir Malgrace rose to his feet, sure now of killing Sir Lancelot.

"My lord King," cried Sir Malgrace, "you have heard this offer. I accept."

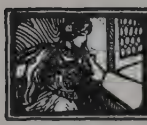
The king was very sorry that Sir Lancelot had made the offer. However, it was impossible to withdraw it. A squire came and disarmed Sir Lancelot, so that his head and left side were without cover; and since he had only one arm to fight with, he could not use his shield.

Then Sir Malgrace dashed at him, aiming for his left side. Sir Lancelot waited till he was very near, and then lightly stepped aside. Before Sir Malgrace could turn, Sir Lancelot lifted his spear and struck his enemy such a blow

How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen

that he broke his breastplate and pierced his heart.

The body of Sir Malgrace was carried off the field and taken to the castle of his good father; Queen Guinevere was proclaimed innocent of treason; and Sir Lancelot was honored more than ever by his king and his queen.



SIR LANCELOT AND ELAINE

EVERY year King Arthur's knights held a grand tournament among themselves, and contended in friendly combat for a prize. This prize was a diamond.

Once, in the early days of his kingship, Arthur was walking on a craggy hill, when he came upon the skeleton of a man who had once been a ruler. The skull still wore a gold crown set with nine large diamonds. King Arthur took the crown and had the diamonds unset. Each year at the friendly tournament he gave one of these diamonds as a prize.

There had been eight tournaments, and at each Sir Lancelot had won the diamond. The jewel that was to be given as a prize at the ninth tournament was the largest and most beautiful of all.

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

Everyone, of course, expected that Sir Lancelot would win it, but only a few days before the contest he announced to the king that he would not compete.

Then the queen was vexed, for she loved Sir Lancelot more than all the other knights, and it gave her great joy to see him always successful in the tournaments. Therefore she urged him to change his decision.

"My queen," he said, "I told the king I would not fight."

The queen replied:

"My advice is that you go in disguise. The knights who contest with you do so but half-heartedly, for they know your great fame and feel sure of failure. If they did not know who you were, they would fight better and win more glory for themselves. Then fight as a stranger knight, and afterwards explain to the king."

Sir Lancelot took her advice. He rode away over the woods and hills till he came to the castle of Astolat, where he decided to stop and ask for a disguise. He knocked on the gate, which was opened

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

by an old dumb servant, and entered the courtyard. The lord of Astolat came to meet him with his two sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine, and his beautiful daughter Elaine. The lord of the castle said:

"Fair sir, whoever you are, you are welcome. You seem to me much like a Knight of the Round Table."

"That I am," said Sir Lancelot. "Hereafter I will tell you my name; at present I wish to remain unknown. I must enter the coming tournament as an unknown knight, and I should like to leave with you my great shield, for it is as well known in Camelot as I. Will you keep it and lend me another one?"

Then answered the Lord of Astolat:

"You may take the shield of my son Torre. He was hurt in his first tournament, and has not been able to fight since. My son Lavaine will gladly go with you to the tournament. Perhaps," added the lord, laughing, "he can win the diamond, and put it in his sister Elaine's hair."

"Nay, father, do not make me ashamed before this noble knight," said the young Lavaine. "I know I can never win the

diamond for Elaine, but I can at least do my best to fight." *Sir Lancelot and Elaine*

"Gladly will I take you for a companion," said Sir Lancelot, "and if you can win the diamond for this fair maiden."

"Such a diamond," said Sir Torre, "is fit for a queen, and not for a simple girl."

Sir Lancelot smiled to himself. He was sure that he should win the diamond. Then he meant to give it with the eight others to Queen Guinevere. He spoke kindly, however, to the beautiful Elaine.

"In truth, this fair maiden is fit to be a queen."

Then Elaine lifted her eyes and looked at him. He was twice as old as she was. His face was cut and scarred with wounds which he had received in battle, but as she looked at him, she loved him, and felt that she would continue to love him till the day of her death.

They went into the great hall where a supper was laid. Sir Lancelot talked of King Arthur and his goodness and all his glorious deeds. Elaine thought that even Arthur could not be so brave as this wonderful lord. All night long she

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

dreamed of him. In the morning she rose early and went down in the courtyard where Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine were mounting their horses.

"Fair lord," she said boldly to Sir Lancelot, "will you wear my token in your helmet?"

Then said Sir Lancelot:

"Fair maiden, I have never worn favor nor token for any lady in the tournaments. This is well known to be my custom."

"But if you wear my token," she said, "there will be far less likelihood of your being known by your fellow knights."

"That is very true, my child," he said. "Bring it to me. What is it?"

She held it out to him; it was a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Sir Lancelot bound it in his helmet and said:

"I have never done so much before for any maiden."

Then he and Sir Lavaine bade Elaine farewell, and the beautiful maiden ran up to the tower of the castle and watched them from the window for a long time.

"She stayed near it all day long in the turret"

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

When they were out of sight she asked the old dumb servant to carry Sir Lancelot's shield to the tower. It was a large shield of silver, with three lions emblazoned upon it in gold and blue, but its polished surface was covered with dents and scratches. Elaine knelt before it, and made a story for each scratch and mark, picturing to herself the contests in which the good shield had taken part For many weeks she stayed near it all day long in the turret, watching for Sir Lancelot and her brother to return.

Meanwhile those two had ridden lightly to Camelot, and when they were almost there, Sir Lancelot told Sir Lavaine his name. The young man was astonished. He was very happy, too, to think that he was a companion to the great knight of whom he had heard so often.

When Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine arrived at the field where the tournament was to be held, they stood looking at the king, who sat upon the great carved chair which had dragons' heads for the arms and the back. On his red robe

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

was embroidered a golden dragon, and a golden dragon was also on his crown. Above him, set in a canopy, was the ninth diamond. All about the king to left and right were rows of ladies whose robes gave to the pavilion in which they sat the brilliant hues of the rainbow.

Sir Lancelot said to young Sir Lavaine:

"Look at the king. You think I am great, but he is greater than I. I can fight better than he can, but his soul is greater than mine. Aim to become a Knight of the Round Table, and follow the example of goodness which Arthur sets for his knights."

At this moment the trumpets blew as a signal that the tournament was to begin. The knights spurred their horses forward, and in a moment their spears and shields clashed. Sir Lancelot rode lightly here and there, overthrowing everyone with whom he contested. All wondered at the skill of this unknown knight. Then Sir Lancelot's kinsmen, his nephew, Sir Lionel, and others, were angry and jealous.

"Our Sir Lancelot should be here,"

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

they said, "to overcome this stranger knight."

"Perhaps this is Sir Lancelot," said one "Two knights cannot fight so well in this world. It must be Sir Lancelot."

"No, no," said the others; "Sir Lancelot would never wear a lady's favor, and this knight wears a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Let us set on this man and teach him that if Sir Lancelot is not here, we, his kinsmen, will fight for his fame."

Then all together they bore down on Sir Lancelot. His horse went down in the shock, and he himself was wounded. A spear had pierced his breastplate and snapped off in his side.

Young Sir Lavaine rushed to help Sir Lancelot. The great knight rose slowly and, with the help of his friend, drove back his kith and kin to the far side of the field. Then sounded a great blare of trumpets, and the king proclaimed the stranger knight victor.

"Come forward," the herald cried, "and take your diamond."

But poor Sir Lancelot said:

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

"Talk not to me of diamonds. Give me air. I fear me I have received my death wound. Let me go hence, and I bid you follow me not."

Sir Lavaine helped him upon his horse, and they two rode slowly off the field. When they were near the neighboring forest the great knight fell from his horse and cried:

"Pull forth the spear-head which is in my side."

"Oh, my lord," said Sir Lavaine, "I am afraid you will die if I draw it forth."

"I shall die if you leave it," said Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Lavaine drew it forth quickly, causing Sir Lancelot to faint from the pain. Then a hermit who lived near by came to them, and bore the wounded knight into his hut, where for many a week Sir Lancelot lay between life and death.

When Arthur found that the unknown knight had gone, no one knew whither, he was sorry. He called the light-hearted Sir Gawain and said to him:

"Go forth, take this diamond and seek

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

the stranger knight. Do not cease from your search till you have left the diamond in his hand."

Then Arthur went to the queen. She had been ill and had not attended the tournament. When the king told her all that had happened, she cried:

"A stranger knight! My lord, my lord! That was our dear Sir Lancelot. He was fighting in disguise."

"Alas! he is hurt," said the king. "Perhaps he is dying. He said that he would not fight. He should have told me that he meant to fight in disguise. The truth, my queen, is always best."

"Yes, my good lord, I know it," she said. "If I had but let our Lancelot tell the truth, perhaps he would not have been wounded. You would have called on his kinsmen to cease."

For many days the king and Guinevere waited in deep anxiety for news of Sir Lancelot. Meantime, Sir Gawain rode forth and sought for the great knight in vain. At last he came to the castle of Astolat, where he was welcomed by the lord and Sir Torre and the fair

Elaine. He told them the result of the tournament, and how the stranger knight had won. They showed him Sir Lancelot's shield. *Sir Lancelot and Elaine*

"Ah!" said Elaine, when he had told them the name of the unknown knight, "I knew that he must be great."

Sir Gawain guessed by the expression of her beautiful face that she loved Sir Lancelot. So he said:

"Fair maiden, when he returns here for his shield, give him this diamond, which is the prize he won. Perhaps he will prize it the more because you put it into his hand."

Then Sir Gawain bade them farewell and rode off, lightly singing. When he told Arthur what he had done, the king said:

"You should have done as I bade you, Gawain. Sir Lancelot deceived me about his disguise, and you have disobeyed me. The kingdom will surely fail if the king and his rules are not honored. Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

Meanwhile the fair Elaine went to her father and said:

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

"Dear father, let me go and seek the wounded Sir Lancelot and my brother."

"Nay," said the lord, "it is not a fitting thing for a young maiden like you to seek a wounded knight. He is not your lover. It cannot be."

"I would give him his diamond," she said, "and since he is so sorely wounded, I would take care of him. It is not fitting, my father, but I cannot live unless I know where he is and how he does."

Then, because he loved his child very much and had never refused any request she made of him, the old lord let her go in care of Sir Torre. The two rode for a long time, until at last, near Camelot, they met Sir Lavaine. Elaine ran up to him and cried:

"Lavaine, take me to Sir Lancelot."

Sir Lavaine was much astonished that Elaine knew the name of the stranger knight. He was glad to see her, because he thought she could help his friend. Sir Lancelot seemed glad to see her, too, and the beautiful maiden cared for him so tenderly that the old hermit said he never could have recovered without her nursing.

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

When he was well enough, they all rode to the castle of Astolat.

There Sir Lancelot remained for a few days; then he took his shield and prepared to return to Camelot. Before he went he asked Elaine if he could not do something for her in return for her care of him.

She grew very pale and then she said:

"I am going to say something which I should not. I love you. Take me with you to Camelot."

Sir Lancelot said very gently:

"My poor little maiden, if I had meant to take a wife, I should have wedded earlier. All the court knows that I love only the king and the queen. You do not really love me. Some day you will marry a young knight, and then I shall give you many castles and much land as a dowry."

"I will have nothing of all that," said Elaine.

She turned away and climbed up to the tower, while her father said to Sir Lancelot:

"I pray you, be discourteous in some way so that she will cease to love you. Such love is madness."

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

"It is not my habit to be discourteous," said Sir Lancelot. "However, when she stands at the turret window to wave me farewell, I will not look up at her."

Sir Lancelot rode sadly away, and did not look up at the window where Elaine stood. She watched him till he disappeared, and then she fell in a swoon. Day after day she pined away, and one morning she said to her father:

"Dear father, I am going to die. When I am dead, take my bed and cover it with rich draperies. Then dress me in my most beautiful clothes; put a letter I have here in my hand, and lay me on the bed. Set it on a barge, and let our dumb servant steer it down the river to Camelot."

Her father wept, and promised to do all that she asked.

Sir Lancelot had gone to the Court, where he was received with great rejoicing. For many days the knights and ladies held great feasting in his honor, and the king and the queen would hardly allow him to leave their presence. One day while the three stood looking out of

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"Sir Lancelot rode sadly away, and did not look up at Elaine"

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

the palace window, they saw a black barge come slowly down the river.

It stopped at the palace door, and the king, going down, saw on it the beautiful maiden Elaine, pale in death. She was dressed in white satin, and bore a lily in her left hand and a letter in her right. The king ordered two of his knights, the good Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval, to carry Elaine into his great hall. Then Arthur read the letter, which said:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake: I, Elaine, the maid of Astolat, come to take my last farewell of you, for you left me without a farewell. I loved you, and my love had no return, and so I died."

The knights and ladies wept. Sir Lancelot said to Arthur:

"My king, I grieve for the death of this maiden, but as I did not love her, I could not wed her."

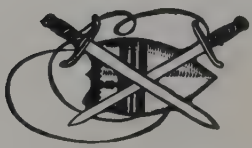
The king answered:

"You are not to blame, Sir Lancelot. The world has in it much that is sad as well as much that is joyous. There are happenings for which no human being

Sir Lancelot and Elaine

can be blamed. It would be a fitting deed, however, if you had this maiden richly buried."

Sir Lancelot ordered a splendid funeral, such as should be given to a queen. Over Elaine's grave was raised a beautiful tomb on which was carved her figure, with the left hand holding a lily; at her feet lay the shield of Sir Lancelot, and the sad story of her death was written on the tomb in letters of gold and blue.



THE SEARCH FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

IN Arthur's Court there were many virtuous knights and ladies, but the best of all was a beautiful maiden, sister to Sir Perceval. She was so good that the evil in the world oppressed her, and she could be happy only when she was praying for all people to be made better.

Once a good old man told her what was meant by the Holy Grail.

"Grail," he said, "is the word for the cup out of which our Lord Jesus drank, the night that he held the last supper with his disciples. Therefore, it is called holy. There is a tradition which says that for a long time after the death of Christ the Holy Grail remained on earth, and any one who was sick and touched it was healed at once. But then people

The Search for the Holy Grail

grew to be so wicked that it disappeared from earth. It is said that if a person in our day were only good enough, he could see the Holy Grail."

"Really see it?" asked the maiden, eagerly, "or see it in a vision?"

"I do not know," answered the good old man, "but either one would be a great happiness. For a real sight of it, or a vision, would show the person who saw it that he was sinless."

Then the beautiful maiden prayed more than ever. She became so thin and pale that it seemed as if she were almost transparent, and at last she lay dying. One morning she sent for her brother, Sir Perceval, and for his friend, Sir Galahad.

Sir Perceval and Sir Galahad were the two best knights in Arthur's Court. They were not so powerful as Sir Lancelot or Sir Geraint or Sir Gareth, but they had purer souls than these. When they came to the bedside of the maiden, she said:

"Oh, my brother and my friend, I have seen the Holy Grail. Last night I was awakened by a sound like the music of a

silver horn across the hills. It was more beautiful music than any I have ever heard. Then through my window shone a long cold beam of silver light, and slowly across that beam came the Holy Grail. It was red like a beautiful rose, and the light reflected from it covered all the walls with a rosy color. And then it vanished. Now I beg you to seek it; and go to the hall of Arthur and tell all the other knights to take the quest. If they can but see the Grail, it will be a sign that they are good, and that the world is growing better."

The Search for the Holy Grail

As she spoke, Sir Galahad's face wore an expression so like her own that Sir Perceval was amazed. But the maiden took from the side of her bed a sword-belt, and gave it to Sir Galahad.

"Fair knight," she said, "I have made this golden belt of my hair, and woven on it, in crimson and silver thread, the device of the Holy Grail. Put on this belt, bind your sword to it, and go forth; for you, too, shall see the Holy Grail."

Then Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval went away quietly, for they saw that the

The Search for the Holy Grail

beautiful maiden had not long to live. That night they went to Arthur's hall. The king was absent with the queen, but most of the knights of the Round Table were there, and to them Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval told the vision that Sir Perceval's sister had seen.

As they spoke, suddenly the torches in the hall were extinguished; there was a loud sound like thunder and a sudden cracking of the roof. Then a beam of light, seven times stronger than day, streamed into the room. Across the beam stole the Holy Grail. But it was covered by a luminous cloud, so that its shape could not be seen. Slowly it vanished away.

There was silence in the hall for a long time; the knights were awe-struck and could not speak. At last Sir Perceval rose in his seat and said in a low tone:

"My sister saw the vision of the Holy Grail, but I, because I am more sinful, have seen it covered with a cloud. Yet because I wish to see it, I vow to spend twelve months and a day in search of it.

I will pray, and live as holy a life as I can, and perhaps this vision will be mine." *The Search for the Holy Grail*

Then good Sir Bors, the cousin of Sir Lancelot, made the same vow, as did also Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain and many others. After the vows had been taken, King Arthur entered. When all had been explained to him, his face grew sorrowful.

"If I had been here," he said, "I should not have allowed you to swear the vow. None of you really saw the Grail; you say it was covered with a cloud."

Then Sir Galahad cried out:

"My king, I saw the Grail, all crimson like a ruby, and I heard a voice which said, 'O Galahad, O Galahad, follow me!'"

"Ah, Galahad," said the king, tenderly, "you are fit for this quest, this search, but the others are not. Sir Lancelot is our strongest warrior, but he is not like Sir Galahad. Most of you, my knights, are men with strength and will to right wrongs; that is the work you are fitted for. You have fought in twelve

The Search for the Holy Grail

great battles with the heathen, but only one of you is fit for this holiest of visions. Yet go, and fulfill your vow."

The faces of the knights were downcast. The king continued:

"While you are gone, I shall need your strength here at home, but you will be following a wandering fire. Many of you will never return."

All the company felt sad. The next day when the knights departed upon their quest, the king could hardly speak for grief, and many of the knights and ladies wept. Those who had sworn the vow went together to the great gate of the city of Camelot, and there they separated.

During the next twelvemonth many a poor laborer who had been wronged came to Arthur's Court to find a knight who would fight for him, and many a poor widow and maiden. But because so many of the knights of the Round Table were absent there was little help to be had, and Arthur's face grew sadder and sadder as time went on.

At last, after the twelvemonth and the

day had passed, those in Camelot began to look for the return of the knights who had taken the vow. Alas, though they waited all day long, only Sir Gawain, Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Lancelot returned. In the evening the knights of the Round Table assembled in the great hall. When each was seated, the king rose, and said to those who had been upon the quest: *The Search for the Holy Grail*

"My lords, I need only look at your faces to know that you have fared ill. I dare not think of those of you who have not come back. And now, Perceval, my knight who, next to Galahad, has the purest soul, tell me what has happened to you."

Sir Perceval rose slowly from his chair and said:

"Dear my liege, when I left your court on the sad morning that we all set forth, I did not feel the grief that many of the other knights felt. I had been fighting so well, so many lances had gone down before my stroke, that I was full of confidence in what I could do.

"I rode happily, planning all the great

The Search for the Holy Grail

victories I should win. I was sure if I righted a great many wrongs, I should soon see the Grail. But after many days I began to grow weary. I was riding through rough forests, and the branches bruised me and my horse; there seemed to be no great deeds to do. I could not even slay wild beasts, and so be of use to the poor country people. My bed was on the hard ground, and my food was wild berries.

"One day I came to a great castle, and here I decided to rest. When I entered, I was warmly greeted and brought to the princess of the castle. I found her to be one whom I had loved long ago in her father's court. I was but a young squire and she was a great princess, and so I had gone away without telling her how dear I held her.

"She greeted me kindly, and after a time she began to love me. Soon I wondered whether I was fit to see the Holy Grail. I thought perhaps I was one of those who were pursuing a wandering fire. And then the people of the castle begged me to marry their princess, and

be their lord and live a happy and easeful life.

The Search for the Holy Grail

"One night I awoke, and thought longingly of the Holy Grail. Whether I were fit to see the vision or not, I had at least sworn to seek it for a year and a day. And yet, I had not tried two months! I rose hastily, dressed, and left the castle. Then for many days I prayed and mourned. At last I sought a holy hermit, and told him all I had done and thought since I had left Arthur's Court.

"The good hermit, after a short silence, said: 'My son, you have not true humility. You have been too proud of your strength, and too sure in the beginning that you were fit for the vision. You have always thought first of yourself and your own glory, and not of the good you could do.'

"I went into the chapel of this hermit, and prayed to be relieved of the sin of pride. As I prayed, Sir Galahad entered. He was clad in silver armor, and his face looked like that of an angel.

"'Oh, my brother,' he said, 'have you

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not seen the Grail?' And after I had answered, he said:

"'From the moment when I left the court of our king, the vision has been with me. It is faint in the daytime, but at night it shines blood red. I see it on the mountains, and in the lakes, and on the marshes. It has made me so strong that everywhere I am able to do good. I have broken down many evil customs. I have fought with pagan hordes and been victor, all because of this blessed vision. Perceval, I have not long to live. I am going to the great city above, which is more beautiful than any earthly city. Come out with me this night, and before you die you shall see this vision.'

"Then I followed Sir Galahad out of the chapel. We climbed a hill which was steep and rugged, Sir Galahad going first, and his silver armor guiding me. When we came to the top, a storm broke over us, and the lightning seemed to follow us as we descended the hill on the other side. At the bottom of it there was a great black swamp, leading to the sea. It was crossed by a huge bridge built by some

"And across it slowly moved the Holy Grail"

The Search for the Holy Grail

forgotten king. Here Sir Galahad left me and ran over the bridge till he reached the sea. His armor shone like a star, far away at the edge of the water. And then I saw him no more.

"I knelt on the black ground and wept, and wished that I were as good as Sir Galahad, and could do deeds as he did, not to win glory, but to help those who needed help. And as I wept, I was aware of a great light over me. I looked up and saw a silver beam, and across it slowly moved the Holy Grail. It was no longer muffled in a cloud, but shone crimson as a ruby.

"I made my way back to the chapel and prayed all the rest of the night. In the morning I found Sir Galahad's body by the sea. He was beautiful as a saint, though he was worn and thin from long self-sacrifice. I buried him and then turned my steps to Camelot.

"And now, my lord Arthur, I shall never fight again. I shall become a monk and pass my life in prayer as my sister did. Among my brother monks, there will be very many little deeds of

service I can do. Thus will I spend my life." *The Search for the Holy Grail*

All the knights were very much moved and the king looked affectionately at Sir Perceval, but he did not speak to him. He turned to Sir Gawain and said:

"Sir Gawain, was this quest for you?"

Then Sir Gawain, always light-hearted and easily turned away from one thing to another, said:

"Nay, my king, such a search is not for one like me. In a little time I became tired. I talked to a holy man who told me that I was not fit for such a vision. So I journeyed till I came to a field with silk pavilions and very many knights and ladies. And with them I lived happily for the year."

The good king looked displeased, but his face grew tender as he turned to Sir Bors.

"Bors," he said, "good, faithful, and honest you have ever been. Tell me what you have seen."

Sir Bors, who stood near Sir Lancelot, said:

"My lord Arthur, after I had started

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on the quest, I was told that madness had fallen upon my kinsman, Sir Lancelot. This so grieved me that I had but little heart to seek for the Holy Grail. Yet I sought for it. I believed that if God meant me to see the vision he would send it.

"I traveled till I came to a people who were heathen. They knew much of magic, but nothing of God. I stayed with them, and tried to teach them our faith, but they were angry because I would not believe in their gods, and they put me into prison.

"I was there many months in darkness and cold. But I tried to be patient, and prayed that my patience would count for something, although I could not do any good deeds. I had at least been faithful though I failed.

"One night a stone slipped from my prison wall, and I could see a space of sky, with seven stars set across it. Then slowly across the space glided the Holy Grail. My happiness was great, for I had seen the vision.

"The next morning, a maiden who

had been secretly converted to our religion released me from prison, and I came hither." *The Search for the Holy Grail*

Then the king spoke to Sir Lancelot.

"My Lancelot, the mightiest of us all, have you succeeded in this quest?"

Then Sir Lancelot groaned.

"O, king!" he cried, "your mightiest, yes; and yet, far better it would be if I were like Sir Galahad. A great sin is on my soul, and it was to be rid of this sin that I undertook the quest of the Holy Grail. A hermit told me that only by putting this sin away should I ever see the vision. I strove so hard against it that my old sickness came upon me. I became mad, and rode up and down among waste places, fighting with small men who overthrew me. The day has been when the very sound of my name would have made them tremble.

"At last I came to the sea and saw a boat anchored near the shore. I stepped into it, loosed the anchor, and floated away. For seven days I sailed, and at last I came to an old castle. I entered and heard a voice singing. I followed it

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up, up for a thousand steps. At last I came to a door, which burst open before me. Perhaps I dreamed, and yet I believe I saw the Holy Grail, though it was veiled and guarded by great angels. I thought I saw all this, and then I swooned away. When I came to myself, I was alone in the room. It was many days before I made my way back to Camelot."

For a long time there was silence in the hall, and then Sir Gawain said :

"Sir king, I can fight, and I always shall fight for you. But I do not believe in this vision. All the knights were mad, like Sir Lancelot. They did not really have the vision ; it was but fancy."

Then the king spoke gravely to Sir Gawain.

"Sir Gawain, you are indeed not fit for such a vision, but you should not doubt that others have seen it. I was right, my knights, when I said that most of you would follow a wandering fire. How many of those who left me have not returned, and never will!"

The knights looked at the empty chairs. The king went on :

"Sir Galahad was the only one who completely saw the vision. He was indeed blessed, and fit for such a quest. You who were unfit should have stayed with me to help govern this land." *The Search for the Holy Grail*

The knights were silent and sad; then the king said:

"My dear knights whom I love, always remember this: whether you seek for a vision, or do humble service as Sir Perceval will for his fellow-monks, or fight to right wrongs as Sir Lancelot does, whatever you do your aim must be to make yourself useful to the world by the work for which you are best fitted."

The king rose from the Round Table and left the company, Sir Lancelot following him. Then the other knights departed, one by one, and the great hall was left empty, with its shields glimmering in the moonlight.

THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

KING ARTHUR'S Round Table had lasted many years, and the knights had done much to help the people of the country; yet there were traitors to the king among his own subjects. One of these traitors made war in a distant part of the kingdom, and Arthur went with most of his knights to punish him. His nephew, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, ruled in his stead at Camelot.

Now Sir Modred was a wicked knight. He hated the king and the queen, and Sir Lancelot. Since King Arthur was absent a long time, Sir Modred had the opportunity of doing much harm. He let evil go unpunished; he allowed bad customs to come into the country; and at

last he raised a rebellion against the good king. *The Death of Arthur*

When Arthur returned to Camelot to quell this rebellion, he had lost many of his faithful knights. Sir Hector was dead, and Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias; Sir Kay was dead, and Sir Bors, and Sir Gawain. Sir Lancelot was far away. Sir Bedivere alone remained of those who had been with Arthur since he had first ruled in Wales and Britain.

The king and Sir Bedivere, with the help of such knights as still were faithful, tried to put down those rebels. They drove the traitors back until they came at length to Lyonnesse by the sea. Here the last great battle took place.

The night before the battle, Sir Bedivere heard the king praying. Then Arthur slept, and when he awakened he called to his friend:

"Sir Bedivere," he said, "I have had a dream. I thought that Sir Gawain came to me and told me that to-morrow I shall die."

"My lord, it is but a dream," answered Sir Bedivere. "You are great; you have

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done much good which will last forever, and you will live many years yet to perform many gracious acts. The day will soon dawn, and you will win the battle."

Arthur shook his head.

"This is not like my other battles. I have no heart for it. It is hard to slay my own people, even if they are traitors."

Day came, but no sun. A cold white mist lay over land and sea. It chilled the knights to the bone. And when the battle began, the mist was so thick that no one could see with whom he was fighting. Friends slew each other, not knowing whom they killed. Some could not fight at all, for it seemed to them that those moving on the battle-field were ghosts of warriors long since slain. There was many a noble deed and many a base one done in that mist.

The fighting went on with clashing of lances and shields throughout the afternoon, and then the sounds grew fainter, till there was silence. At last, towards sunset, a wind from the west blew the mist away. Then Arthur, with Sir Bedivere by his side, looked over the field of

battle. He saw but one man standing; all the rest were dead on the seashore. And the tide had risen, and was swaying the helpless hands, and tumbling up and down the hollow helmets and the broken spears that once had fought with Rome. The king's face was white, and his voice was low as he said to Sir Bedivere : *The Death of Arthur*

"There lie my slain, who have died for me. I am king only of the dead."

"Nay, lord," said Sir Bedivere. "You are king everywhere still. Now strike a kingly stroke against the one traitor who still stands."

Sir Bedivere pointed at the one other living man, and the king saw that it was Sir Modred. Arthur threw down his scabbard and lifted his good Excalibur. Then he sprang upon the traitor. Sir Modred struck the king on the helmet, which had been worn thin in many battles. The stroke cut through the steel, and wounded Arthur mortally, but he used his ebbing strength for one last blow with Excalibur, and killed Sir Modred.

The king sank to the ground, but Sir Bedivere lifted him, and bore him to a

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ruined chapel near the seashore. When he had laid him down by the broken cross in the chancel, Arthur said:

"You know well that my Excalibur was given to me by the Lady of the Lake. I have used it like a king. And now the time has come to obey the writing on the blade. So take my sword Excalibur, and throw it far out into the lake."

Sir Bedivere took the sword and went out from the ruined chapel. He walked amid the graves of ancient knights over which the sea wind was singing. He passed the barren cliffs and chasms, and reached the lake at last.

He lifted Excalibur, and as he did so the moon came from behind the clouds. The light fell on the hilt of the sword, and all the jewels shone. Sir Bedivere looked until his eyes were dazzled; he could not throw the beautiful weapon away. So he hid it in the weeds upon the shore of the lake, and returned to the king.

"What did you see or hear?" asked Arthur.

Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, and the wild water lapping on the crags." *The Death of Arthur*

King Arthur, faint and pale, said:

"You have betrayed me. You have acted a lie. Had you thrown the sword, something would have happened, some sign would have been given. Go back now, and throw it into the lake."

Sir Bedivere went back and again picked up Excalibur. As he looked at it he said aloud:

"Surely it is not right to throw away such a precious thing. It would please the eyes of people forever. I know it is wrong to disobey the king. Yet he is sick; perhaps he does not know what he is doing. If I keep Excalibur and store it in a great treasure-house, people will look at it throughout all the coming years, and feel great reverence for the king who fought with it."

So again Sir Bedivere hid the sword and returned to the king, who asked:

"What have you seen or heard?"

And Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the water lapping on the

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crag, and the long ripple washing in the reeds."

Then the king was very angry.

"Ah, unkind!" he cried. "You, too, are a traitor. Because I am dying, I have no authority. You refuse to obey me, you who are the last of my knights! Yet it is possible for a man to fail in his duty twice, and succeed the third time. Go now, and throw Excalibur."

Sir Bedivere ran quickly and seized the sword, shutting his eyes that he might not see its beauty. He whirled it round his head and threw it far out over the lake. It flashed in the moonlight and fell. But before it reached the surface of the water, an arm, clothed in pure white, rose and caught it, brandished it three times, and then drew it under the water.

When Sir Bedivere went back to Arthur, the king knew that he had been obeyed.

"I am dying," he said. "Lift me on your back and carry me to the lake."

Then Sir Bedivere carried the helpless king, walking quickly through the place

of tombs, and over the crags, and past the chasms, till he came to the smooth shining lake. There beside the bank was a barge, all black. The deck was covered with stately figures of people clad in mourning. Among them were three fair queens with crowns of gold — the three queens who were to help Arthur at his need. *The Death of Arthur*

They had come to take him away, Sir Bedivere did not know where. When they saw the wounded king, they gave a cry of grief that seemed to rise to the stars. Then they lifted him into the barge. The tallest put his head on her knees, and took off his broken helmet. She called him by name, weeping bitterly.

Poor Sir Bedivere cried:

"Oh, my Lord Arthur, you are leaving me. Where shall I go? The great Round Table is broken up forever. What shall I do?"

Then Arthur answered:

"Old customs pass and new ones come. God makes his world better in many ways. The Round Table did its work and now has disappeared; but some-

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thing else will surely come to advance the cause of truth and justice. Pray for me and for yourself. More things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. And now, farewell! You shall never see me again, my Bedivere. My work is done; yours, too, is nearly over. Farewell!"

Then the barge moved slowly away, while those on board lamented. Sir Bedivere watched it till it disappeared amid the shadows over the lake. Then he rose slowly and wandered back to Lyonnesse.

After a time he went to Camelot. There was a new king there, who was good, and new customs, also good. But Sir Bedivere was too old to change his way of life. He spent the rest of his days in Camelot, but he lived only in the past, dreaming of the time when King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table ruled in the land.

FRIENDS
OF ACPL